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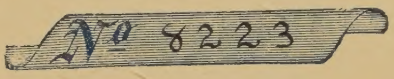

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TELLING BIBLE STORIES

TELLING BIBLE STORIES

BY

LOUISE SEYMOUR HOUGHTON

WITH INTRODUCTION

BY

REV. T. T. MUNGER, D.D.

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1905

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TO

FRANK K. SANDERS, D.D.

TO WHOM

OF ALL MY LATER TEACHERS

I OWE MOST

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INTRODUCTION

The subject of Mrs. Houghton's book has not often had the good fortune to be treated by writers of high merit, nor by those who sympathize with modern thought in theology. Consequently the child has not had fair treatment at the hands of either scholars or theologians. Many times over since Jesus was born have the babes of Bethlehem been slaughtered by those who wield the sword for the sake of doctrines that Christ never knew; and others, in pious weakness, have borne Him away into some Egypt where He sheds no light upon any part of the divine economy save fulfilling a sentence of doubtful prophecy.

Mrs. Houghton, whatever else her thoughtful pages may teach, reveals a use of the child in religion hardly yet suspected until we learn the meaning of Christ's words spoken of the child, "of such is the kingdom of God," because "His kingdom is over man, over the normal, the ideal man," and therefore "childhood reproduces from age to age that which is distinctive of man;" that is, the "simply human." God's kingdom could be of no other, and as such it is universal. Hence Christ said that He reigned in that kingdom. The author makes this fact the basis of her entire contention, and because the child is such a revelation of the elemental man, he is by that very fact a reve-

lation of man with his face toward God. "The spontaneous instincts of the soul, as manifested in the child, are the essentially human instincts." The reader will note that this revelation is not supernatural, but natural, and is therefore the reason why it is a revelation of God, yet, as the author states, "of God in relations with man."

The more definite purpose of the author is to start again in the world what it seems to be fast losing, — the habit of bringing a child into *a sense of God as his second nature*, and so, "without argument, show him that he is in the divine order." To this end these "God-saturated" stories of the Old Testament, the real meaning of which is always God in some human-divine form, may thus be wrought into the growing mind of the child and become his governing force in life.

Dr. Horace Bushnell seems to have been the first in his day to comprehend this truth of remote antiquity; and it is still the best method of learning God. He found himself facing a system of religion that relegated a knowledge of God as impossible until adulthood, when only — and after sore striving — one achieved a hypothetical election to salvation, the hope of which was regarded as an experience of religion. This system may not have been without good result in view of a lack of something better, but it was without a true knowledge of God, or man, or religion. Its conception and its process were void of nature, and this was regarded as its strong point, for nature was evil. Dr. Bushnell struck at the root of this complication of mistakes, and demanded that Christian nurture should be according to the nature

of a child as God made it, — in His own image and after His own laws.

Mrs. Houghton has clearly seen that the right rearing of a child lies in this region of thought. With abundant study and keen insight into its cognate truths she has produced a book the value of which is to be measured only by the thoroughness with which the general subject has been treated in the light of to-day's science and exegesis and the divine humanity, as these things now lie in the master minds of the hour. She pays no heed to orthodoxy or heterodoxy, regarding them as mere phrases without meaning. Indeed, her treatment lies outside of either, and stays in that larger world of thought where the real questions of life are settled.

In tracing the likeness of the child to the kingdom of heaven along the stories of the Old Testament, the author touches the peculiar genius of the Jewish people, — childlike, but capable of highest thought. How or why these two qualities were coupled in this race it is hard to tell, — whether by virtue of some divine force in the child coming straight from the Creator and bringing a trailing cloud of glory, as Wordsworth thought, or springing from some father of nations who had conceived the germinating thought of one invisible God; each is inscrutable mystery. But Mrs. Houghton, with vital common sense, has achieved a lesson well worth learning for its practical use in the family, and also for pondering the question if Christ's consciousness of God as His Father developed from one of these primal possibilities. Even while the child-nation dwelt in tents, it rose to profounder thought than the Greeks, who missed the

conception of one invisible God for that of many sporting on Olympus, — human enough, but without a touch of real divineness. But the Hebrews brooded over a God who divinized their humanity; the Law and the Prophets telling the same thing until One came, saying that the kingdom of God would come, but made of such as a child, and that their children would lead them to it.

In working out her task, Mrs. Houghton does not write what is to be read to children, but instead plays the part of a decoy to tempt adults to learn from her pages what the stories mean before they can have any meaning for children of to-day, who, if taught anything, have been taught what the Bible stories do not mean. We are not far astray in saying that for generations children have seldom been told the real meaning of these stories, from that of the Creation to that of Jonah, — the first and the last having been taught as history, a perversion that robs both of all meaning. But the Hebrew child, so long as the parents retained their native sense of imagination, was taught *to see God* in these and all other stories, whatever else it learned or failed to learn.

It is different to-day. What Sunday-school Society of any great denomination does not permit its agents to give to its schools lesson-books that any school of science in the country would declare to be false; books which find prose in poetry, fact in imagination, and doctrine in sentiment? Yet such, with a few fine exceptions, is the use of Bible stories in the vast majority of Sunday-schools in Christendom. The effect of all this in the Sunday-schools is incipient infidelity. That it does not reach full growth is due

to the fact that it is taught with indifference and dies out through lack of culture, — for so the good God hinders some of our well-meant blunders.

Mrs. Houghton assails with a strong pen and fine courage one of these evils that clings to the church long after all reason for it has passed away. In separating the Bible stories from other misreadings of Scripture, one would think our author has a definite field in which to win an easy victory for truth and common sense, because the greater part of mankind takes side with the child when a good thing is provided for it.

The crucial point where the battle lies is the *historicity* of the Old Testament. Mrs. Houghton deals with it in the same way that a sensible parent deals with it, — out of her own parental instinct, — suffering the literal accuracy to take care of itself, while the truth wrapped up in the story goes straight to the mind of the child. It was the method of the Head Master of Uppingham, whose habit was to read a story from the Bible at daily service, first requiring a perfect knowledge of the text and then putting the sharp question: "Now, boys, what is the *truth* in this story? Never mind whether the story is true or not; *what does it mean?*" Dr. Thring sent out from Uppingham no incipient infidels due to a lack of correct Bible instruction. No boy taught by him would ever scoff at the story of Jonah, or raise the question if ravens fed Elijah, or blunder by finding a doctrine of the atonement in the sacrifice of Isaac. It would not be extravagant to say that if in the Sunday-schools of our nation this manner of explaining the history and the stories of the Old Testament should be taught,

there would be a vast decrease of infidelity and an increase of practical ethics and belief in God, instead of the meagre fruits that now follow these schools.

Much criticism is being poured out upon those scholars who pass under the title of higher critics, as though they were the enemies of religion. We would not say a word against their work or method, for it lies in the path of eternal necessity. The very stones in the street would cry out if it were not done. But we could wish their path led more often to the feet of Christ. Then the noblest literature, the truest ethics, the highest qualities of human nature, the sense of law, and, above all, a sense of God and obedience to the law of God, would not lie upon the pages of dead history, but in the ever-living Christ in whom the truth of the past never dies.

One who reads these pages carefully will note that Mrs. Houghton's interpretations are in every case lifted and ennobled by the great thought out of which her general conception of the Hebrew mind springs. Its entire scheme of religious teaching and training is to soften and enlighten and mould the whole nature of the child in its plastic years into likeness to the eternal Father, the summation of which was fulfilled in Christ.

Under such interpretation the Christ is not made to appear as a blank outcome of miracle, but as a divinely natural outcome of a people into whose thought He was already born.

Mrs. Houghton has entered into the thought of to-day in regard to the general relation of the Christ of the New Testament to the Christ of the Old, but we do not recall any other writer who has found in

Christ that the kingdom of heaven is correlated to the child-history and character of the Hebrew people and is to be found in its literature. We congratulate Mrs. Houghton upon having wrought out this conception as a fine and tenable piece of valuable interpretation, and also of achieving a most carefully written series of studies in the Old Testament, that illustrate and confirm her thesis.

T. T. MUNGER.

TELLING BIBLE STORIES

CHAPTER I

THE OLD TESTAMENT AND THE CHILD

I

When our Lord chose the little child as the concrete illustration of His kingdom, it was not because of the faultlessness, nor even because of the humility of the child. Nor was it because of the readiness of the child to be of use, to serve, though in this respect the normal child is very like the Master. Jesus said of the little child, "of such is the kingdom of God," because His kingdom is over man, over the normal, the ideal man, and "childhood reproduces from age to age that which is distinctive of man";[1] not man Greek or Roman, Anglo-Saxon or American, but simply human. The spontaneous instincts of the soul, as manifested in the child, are the essentially human instincts.

There is, therefore, a striking appropriateness in the words which form the subject of this chapter. Seldom have two words been so fitly joined

[1] George Matheson, D.D., "The Representative Men of the Bible."

as these, "the Old Testament" and "the child." For, if the child is the true representative of the human, so is the Old Testament the marvellous and accurate revelation of human nature in all its elemental characteristics. A revelation of God, — yes; but of God in relations with man. This is, indeed, the only possible revelation of Him; and in the nature of things, therefore, He is most clearly revealed in relations with that man who has most of the child spirit.

Some years ago the editor of *Harper's Magazine*, in that profound and original book, "A Study of Death," pointed out that Israel's was essentially a child nature, with all the artless spontaneity, all the sensuous impressionability, — which is antipodally different from sensuality, — all the delight in color, in melodious sound and rhythmic motion, all the quick sense of humor, the boundless reach and compelling authority of imagination, which characterize the child everywhere, in all ages. The Old Testament, therefore, the product of a child nation, is in its very nature the book for the children of every nation. It would be preëminently "the child's own book" even if it had no special and unique value of its own over other books for children.

But the Old Testament has a special and unique value. This every intelligent reader concedes,

whatever may be his views of the historic authority or the literary importance of the volume. Its unique value lies in that God-consciousness with which its every page is saturated. The Old Testament, being, like the child, a revelation of the essential human, of the elemental man, is by that very fact a revelation of man with his face toward God. And this is why the Old Testament is the natural reading of the child. For there is in all the world nothing so reasonable to the unsophisticated human being as God. We never have to explain the word "God" to the youngest baby to whom words mean anything. Man is, indeed, a religious animal, as has so often been said: the meaning of which is, that long before the age of reason or reflection arrives, almost before the baby has passed the age where its entire consciousness is a craving for the satisfaction of its appetites, the little soul reaches out for God, and grasps with satisfaction the fact that He exists.

The faculty of God-consciousness with which the child is born is indeed a twofold inheritance. Dr. Matheson, endeavoring to explain the mysterious and baffling dualism of human nature, its tendency to sin and its faculty for holiness, shows from the story of Adam that every child begins the world with an important capital, a long strain of heredity, "a bias from earth and a bias from

heaven," "dust and the Father's breath." But even his inheritance of dust is not without the Father's breath. There are adumbrations of religion, as a recent writer has shown,[1] in the mutual service of flowers and of animals so low in the scale of existence as sponges, no one individuality of which is complete, nor could exist, without the others. These adumbrations of religion are not religion, for they include no God-consciousness, but they clearly show that even man's heredity of dust has an inveterate bias toward that faculty of God-consciousness which is his heredity from the Father's breath, and with which every child of Adam is born into the world. This faculty may be developed to a marvellous degree; it may be perverted, as it is among the cultivated peoples of the East; its development may be arrested, as it is among barbarous peoples of all primitive societies; it may be lost, as it too often is lost among progressive peoples of the West. Occupied and absorbed as they are, with business or pleasure or the cultivation of the intellect, the faculty at last seems to disappear for want of use, and now, in this latest age of history, for the first time in the history of man, we find persons of high intellectual develop-

[1] Greville Macdonald, "The Religious Sense in its Scientific Aspect."

ment and noble social initiative entirely unaware of any need of God. In the Museum of Natural History, New York, one may see those prehistoric skeletons which show that the primitive horse possessed a foot as well developed and almost as beautiful as a baby's, and which record its gradual deterioration through the effect of an uncongenial environment, until at last a single horny toe is all that is left of the once flexible and beautiful member. So it has come to be with this highest of human faculties.

Our children are born into this environment of the West and of the twentieth century, which of all other times and places is least congenial to the development of this fundamental human instinct, this "inevitable God-consciousness"; and if this nation is not to become like France, — a nation where infidelity has the controlling voice in the national councils, a people whose highest faculty is well-nigh atrophied, — parents and teachers are solemnly bound to recognize as their most important task that of developing the sense of God until it becomes the commanding factor in the child's life. For this there is no better method — in the case of a very young child there is no other method — than "telling Bible stories," in which, without discussion or philosophizing, it is simply assumed and shown that man is in the divine order.

In France, indeed, they have awakened to this necessity, notwithstanding the noisy attempts of the extreme socialistic party to banish God from "all the thoughts" of the nation. The republic had hardly been well established when — in about 1878 — it was found essential to its preservation to pass a law secularizing the common schools, replacing clerical teachers, monks and nuns, by lay men and women. One result of this act was that remarkable development of "congregational" free schools, which has formed one of the most difficult and dangerous problems of the government in this opening century. Another result made itself more immediately felt. The next census revealed an appalling increase in child crime, and especially in child suicide. A rising young publicist, a serious freethinker, was set by government to study the causes of this woful condition. His report, afterward published in a book entitled "Crime and the School," made a deep impression. It traced the evil to one cause, — the profound soul-discouragement of the child who knew not God. To such a child, at the age of ten, at the age even of seven, life became literally not worth living, and he laid it down in despair, or, failing courage for this supreme act of self-renunciation, he plunged into reckless self-indulgence and crime. This was the more

impressive because, in laicizing the schools, the government had been clear-sighted as to the moral danger involved, and had called to its aid the most brilliant minds in France to prepare a series of text-books in morals, in which all reference to religion should be omitted, for every school grade from the infant class up. The result had been, apparently, to the highest degree satisfactory. It would be difficult to find in any country a series of text-books on ethics equal to these in literary character and pedagogic value. Yet ten years' use of these text-books created so thorough-going a pessimism among the children that they found goodness not worth seeking and life not worth living. The result of this inquiry led the French government to admit that however little the grown man may find a need for any Supreme Being, yet, during the educational period of the child, the ultimate sanction of morals must be found in God, and, notwithstanding the clamors of the atheistic group, the name of God is no longer excluded from school text-books of morals. French pedagogics have thus discovered the truth underlying Napoleon's cynical remark, that if there had been no God it would be necessary to invent one.

Yes, the little child instinctively perceives that the religious life is the natural life, the fulfilment

of human nature in truest, largest ways. The human being lives and moves in the divine order — to ignore this is to be abnormal. That "practice of the presence of God," which is the last acquisition of the profoundly religious man, is the ideal atmosphere for the development of the child nature; and because it was the life habit of the men of ancient Israel, the Old Testament is supremely valuable for the all-round development of the child, — the development of all his faculties and capacities.

II

The culture in the presence of God of all the child's godlike qualities is the mother's supreme task, and for it she can find no more efficient aid than in the "God-saturated" stories of the Old Testament. The progressive development of the child's religious nature, far more important, even for the practical issues of life, than that orderly development of his intellectual and æsthetic faculties which is now the first concern of pedagogics, may best be accomplished by the wise use of these stories, progressively adapted to the developing religious and moral instincts of the child.

It has been strikingly said that the ancient Roman "practised the presence of Calamity."

The Stoic in all ages makes it his study to meet disaster unafraid. The Christian has a more effectual philosophy. The child may be practised in it from his earliest infancy by means of the Bible stories, which keep him always in God's presence, and show him, without argument, that he is in the divine order. In this acutely self-conscious age no corrective is more accurately adjusted to the condition.

"When," says Professor Coe, "education is taken in the profound sense of bringing to expression that which is deepest and most real in man, then it becomes a means of making him conscious of God, in whom he lives and moves and has his being." "The greatest strategic of the Church to-day," he adds, "lies in this direction." It is preëminently the greatest strategic of the home, nor is it possible to begin this education too early. It is abnormal for the youngest child to be without God. Nothing in all the world is so reasonable as God, even to the unsophisticated man, still more so to the child.

It will be admitted without argument that it is impossible to develop this God-consciousness in children by opening to them the religious experiences of their parents or teachers. The absurdity of the idea is self-evident, though as a matter of fact many parents and pastors and nearly all "children's

evangelists" proceed on this impossible principle and endeavor to make the religious experiences of children conform as closely as possible to those of grown persons. No, we cannot bring the children into relations with God by showing them our own relations with Him, because, notwithstanding our Lord's "Except ye become as little children," we are in fact anything but that. But the relations with God which we find mirrored in the Old Testament stories are the relations of a child people with their heavenly Father; they do appeal to the child; they waken in him a response, not of the affections only, but of the intellect; they are an adequate and a compelling force to lead him, while yet a little child, into like personal relations with God. And the child to whom the sense of God early becomes second nature can no more lose it than he can lose the art of walking or of other acquired habits which have become spontaneous.

Now it is psychologically impossible to separate the development of this God-consciousness from the development of other faculties of the child, and here arises the unspeakable mischief of separating the religious education of the child from all the rest of his education, as a thing apart. Not that it must necessarily become a part of his school training, but that it should be carried along with that, and always related to it. The spiritual fac-

ulty is not specifically different from the faculty by which we prosecute the daily duties of life. There is a certain philosophical convenience in distinguishing between soul and spirit, but psychologically they are one. The soul is a unit; the spiritual nature is simply the mind occupied with spiritual things.[1] Obviously then, the stories of the Old Testament are preëminently the proper mental pabulum of the child. "Upon what is the really great mind fed in youth," asks another recent writer,[2] "but the dreamstuff of poets and sages? Now Homer is good dreamstuff, but the Bible is better."

Dreamstuff? Is it wise to encourage the children in dreaming? Is this the way to make practical men and women of them, such as this strenuous age demands? Is it even the way, by any possibility, to make religious men and women of them? The mother who asks these questions is forgetting that it was in dreams that the word of the Lord came to His servants of old. If we do not hear His voice in our dreams, waking or sleeping, it is doubtful whether we shall ever hear Him. If we have not heard His voice in our dreams, waking or sleeping, may it not be for not having been nourished upon the best "dreamstuff"?

This comparison of the relative values of "dreamstuffs" is only another way of saying that the

[1] Professor Coe. [2] Rev. Newton M. Hall.

highest use of all literature is not to fill us with facts, but to set us to thinking. We teach the children history not half so much in order that they may know, and always remember, things that have happened, as that they may understand life, and how to meet it. We repeat poetry to the little ones and tell them fairy tales, not merely to amuse them, nor as an exercise for the memory, but as a stimulus to the imagination and to the æsthetic sense. The Old Testament stories serve both these purposes. The spontaneous instincts of the child, and the almost equally spontaneous revelations of human nature in these stories, correspond one to another as face answers to face in water. The perpetual splendor of sentences in the Old Testament, the lofty sublimity of its suggestions, appeal to the sensuous nature of the child as no other literature does; and there is no nobler endowment of a well-born and well-bred human being than a rich sensuous nature.

Especially appealing to the child is the freshness of feeling which characterizes the Old Testament poetry, making Herder's remark literally as well as figuratively true, that it should be read in the dawn of the morning, because it was the first dawn of the illumination of the soul. The poetic character of the Old Testament also makes it the children's book because the child's nature is the poet's

nature. Not only does the little child love rhythm and the balance of measured utterance, — so that it is not in the least necessary that he should understand a poem or a bit of doggerel in order to delight in it, — it is also true that the child rejoices in poetic forms of utterance, in tropes and figures of speech, and in the play of the imagination. In this respect the Old Testament is peculiarly the little child's book. It abounds in metaphor and poetic imagery. For example, where the Old Testament would refer to great trees, trees whose size was notable, it calls them "trees of God." Our giant redwoods in California would surely be "trees of God" to the mind of the old Hebrew, and no other expression would so well satisfy a child's sense of awe on seeing these trees. So with the mighty voice of the thunder. It was no attempt at scientific explanation, but true poetic instinct which impelled the psalmist to call thunder "the voice of Jehovah."

The voice of Jehovah is upon the waters,
The God of glory thundereth,
Even Jehovah upon many waters.
The voice of Jehovah is powerful,
The voice of Jehovah is full of majesty,
The voice of Jehovah breaketh the cedars,
Yea, Jehovah breaketh in pieces the cedars of Lebanon.

. . . . . .

And in his temple everything saith, Glory! [1]

[1] Psalm xxix.

The ancient Hebrew had no notion of science. He did not ask for the immediate cause of physical events. It entirely satisfied his instinct for ultimate truth to assume that thunder was God's voice; that God had planted those cedars whose life reached back before the memory of man. He related all mysteries to God, and in that relationship his mind rested and his heart was satisfied.

This is why miracle made such strong appeal to the Hebrew mind. To him it was "a sign," the manifestation of the most profoundly true of all facts, the immanent activity of God in every event of life. This is an important clue to the treatment of the Biblical miracles. As myth is the explanation offered by the primitive mind to the mysteries of surrounding nature, so a people deeply stirred by moral problems have, in primitive times, recourse to miracle to explain mysteries in the moral sphere. This fact is an important clue to the miracles of the Bible, and to far more than its miracles. The very viewpoint of the writers of the Old Testament, especially of those parts of it that we call Bible stories, is always the viewpoint of God. They looked upon nature and the world from above. Professor George Adam Smith, in that book of revelation which should lie on every mother's and teacher's table beside the Bible, — "The His-

torical Geography of the Holy Land," — explains the nature descriptions of the Bible by saying that the Hebrew was a highlander, and described nature from the heights. But there is far more in these descriptions than a highlander can see. The Hebrew poet sees even the mountain tops from above, and the cloud effects as if he were looking down from high heaven. "*Jehovah marcheth upon his high place; Israel treadeth upon his high places.*" Joel sees the lurid light of dawn shattered on the mountain tops,[1] crushed between the hills, "spilled like the wine press of the wrath of God." Though not a maritime people Israel yet had wonderful visions of the sea-coast and the sea, for he saw them as God sees them, — from above. For the same reason such words as "valley" and "depth" had a profound meaning to him; they spoke of God's unfathomable judgments. The deep abyss of the Ghor — the Jordan Valley — was a synonym for terror and destruction; freedom, salvation, were "a wide place."

The child mind is intensely susceptible to these images. They are the most perfect food and stimulus for it. The poetic descriptions of nature in the Old Testament are the best possible aids to the cultivation of that eminently cultivatable and most valuable faculty, love of fine scenery.

[1] Joel ii. 2.

Some of the poems in Canticles are admirable for this purpose. As a whole, the Song of Solomon is not a story for the little children, not because it is a love drama, but because its literary character is beyond them, just as "The Princess" is. But its lyrics, like those in "The Princess," are exquisite, and appeal early to the child's æsthetic sense. In fact, the book may come somewhat early into the child's educational experiences if it be used, not to teach the love of Christ for His Church, but to give expression to the child's gladness in the beauty of the world in which he lives.

For all these reasons, and for many more which will appear as we go on, the Old Testament is preëminently the child's book. This is no doubt what President Stanley Hall meant, a few years ago, when he said that the Old Testament stories are the proper beginning of the religious education of the child. The statement was as much discussed at that time as President Butler's later plea for the literary study of the Bible in the schools has been discussed since then, and to the children it is of more importance than the later utterance. It is the religious value of the Old Testament in the life experience of the little child that most concerns us. Its literary importance is very great. We are hearing much about it in

these days, and teachers are beginning to awake to it. Its ethical value is also of the highest importance, although in the current discussions of the ethics of the Old Testament we do not detect any general approval. When this nation has advanced as far as the French in a working knowledge of child psychology, we shall see that even as a matter of education the religious importance of the Old Testament underlies, as it transcends, its literary and its ethical importance.

Probably most of the mothers who read President Stanley Hall's remark experienced a feeling at once of relief and perplexity. They were relieved, because, having themselves been "brought up on" the Old Testament stories, and still cherishing their childhood's love for them, they were glad to find those wise persons mistaken who had assured them that to give the children the Old Testament would be to take a backward step in ethical training. And yet they were perplexed, because having become aware, through much newspaper and magazine discussion, if not by the teaching of pastors and the discoveries of their own Bible reading, that the Old Testament is not precisely the sort of book that their parents and grandparents held it to be, they were thrown back upon the question that had been troubling them before: "How, knowing as I do, that the

Old Testament is not precisely such a book as I was taught to think it, and not knowing as yet precisely what sort of a book it is, how shall I interpret it to my children?"

This question may be answered at once by saying that in the beginning it is not necessary to interpret the stories to the children, — all the mother has to do is to tell them, as nearly as possible in the very words in which they were written, preserving as far as one may the grand, quaint, old-fashioned simplicity of the Bible language, seeking as far as possible to fill the child with the spirit of the great men of whom the stories tell, and to vitalize their nature with the atmosphere of the old book. We do not try to interpret "The splendor falls" or "Break, break, break!" or "Oh, Brignall banks are fresh and fair" or even "John Gilpin." We simply repeat the lines and let the child revel in them, pouring into them such meaning as his own heart supplies. We do not give the dictionary meaning of the words with which we teach our babies to talk. We simply say them often, and the child gives them a meaning. As the children grow older, indeed, the task grows more complex in both cases. The present effort is to understand something of the nature of that complexity.

III

There are, indeed, some who, for practical reasons, desire to learn how to tell the Bible stories to their children, not from any intellectual perplexity as to the character of the Old Testament, but simply that they may make their stories more interesting. They are thoroughly persuaded that the Bible is precisely what their parents taught them that it was. They believe that it was inspired by God, from cover to cover, and all parts of equal authority though not of equal importance, especially to the children. A few of these are telling their children the Bible stories in the dear old way of their mothers and grandmothers; but they are not following the same good example in keeping up the spiritual culture of their children by encouraging them as they grow older to read the Old Testament by themselves, as they read other delightful books. They do not expect their children to read a chapter a day, as their own parents expected them to do; they do not feel quite sure that it would be expedient. Nor are they particularly disturbed if the father's business prevents him from reading the Bible with the children at family prayers. Perhaps this would all be just as well if they had estab-

lished a better way, but they have not; and therefore the beautiful promise of genuine piety which their little children gave fades away as the boys and girls begin to grow up.

These parents do not take special pains to give the Old Testament to their children because they fail to see how it can be useful to them. Though they cherish their "mother's Bible" as she cherished it, they are by no means following their mother's example in its use in the religious training of their children. In which, if Dr. Hall is right, they are surely making a mistake.

These mothers, however, are a rapidly diminishing class. The younger generation, being of the modern time by years and education, are themselves ignorant of the Old Testament, however carefully they may have been taught to reverence it as the very word of God. Being interested in educational problems, these young mothers need not now to be convinced that the children should know this book. Have not President Butler and Dr. Hall and Patterson DuBois and Dr. Hervey and a host of writers on pedagogics and child psychology said so? But as for undertaking themselves to introduce their children to it — as well expect them to give them manual training and military drill! It is for the

help of mothers such as these that the following chapters are written.

IV

Two things are essential to the mother who would find in the Old Testament that help in the child's spiritual nurture which, as President Hall has said, and as I believe, it has to give her in those brief blessed years before her child goes out from her brooding influence to be acted upon by influences which she cannot entirely control. She must understand the nature of the child, and she must recognize the true character of the Old Testament. Both fields of study are exhaustless; if one waited even for a beginning of proficiency in either, the fleeting years of the mother's opportunity would be gone. Happily, both these branches of "things to be learned" are of those which, as Froebel says, are to be learned in the doing of them, and, most happily, each throws light upon the other. We have already seen that the child nature is the key to the Old Testament. It is equally true that the Old Testament is the interpreter of the child nature. No work on child psychology will prove so apt and so immediate a help to the mother who would understand her child as the stories of the Old Testament.

For this purpose those ancient people, as Dr. Matheson says, are not yet an anachronism, "they reveal human nature not only in its eternal sameness but in its eternal variations," because they are all portraits of the age of spontaneity, that is, of youth, whatever may be the number of years that have passed over the heads of their heroes. In this respect the Old Testament is also the mother's own book.

Let not the mother, however, underrate the difficulties which she will encounter in giving the Old Testament to her children. There are others besides those of the higher criticism, — the authorship of the Pentateuch and parts of Isaiah, the historic character of Genesis, and such like. There are questions of morality, — the plain speaking of some chapters, the inadequate notions of right in some others, the want of harmony with the assured conclusions of science, the perplexities of miracles. But, in fact, these are difficulties only to the mother who puts the Old Testament into the hands of her growing child, not having early familiarized him with it, and brought him into sympathy with its spirit, by telling him Bible stories while he was yet in her arms. They are not difficulties to the mother who, before she began to tell the stories, had reached an adequate conception of the actual character of the book,

and its relation to the normal development of her child.

In seeking for this conception we begin with the Bible story, partly because it is where the little child begins, partly because of the great value of the story in making manifest the actual character of the Old Testament. Very certainly, the more clearly we understand the value set upon the story by the writers of the Old Testament, the better we shall understand the book itself. The Old Testament contains an enormous amount of story lore, far more than any one realizes until his attention is especially directed to this matter. The field of this story lore is very vast. The prophetic use of this lore opens a boundless and beautiful vista. The prophets used the short story for a great variety of purposes, though few Bible readers even suspect this. Their striking and effective use of the "walking parable" has lately been pointed out by Dean Sanders. When Jeremiah wanted most effectively to warn Israel that if they did not repent and turn from their evil ways they must become captives of Babylon, he put an ox yoke on his shoulders and went walking through the public places of Jerusalem. That ox yoke, as Dr. Sanders says, spelled captivity. The story tells us how the prophet Hananiah, who highly disap-

proved of such teaching, holding that Israel ought not to be discouraged at such a critical time in the nation's history, took the ox yoke off from Jeremiah's shoulders and broke it, signifying that even should captivity come it could easily be broken or shaken off. But Jeremiah had no notion of submitting to any such contradiction of his story. He went and had an interview with the blacksmith, and shortly after appeared in public wearing a yoke of iron, which Hananiah could no more break than he could avert the threatened captivity, or break it when it came, as it shortly did.

How fascinating a story this for the little child ! And the prophets are full of such. Ezekiel lying for long days in the sight of the exiled Jews in Babylon, lying first on one side and then on the other, in front of his toy besieged city, with mimic mount and battering rams set over against it and an iron pan by way of wall, thus bringing home to the curious onlookers a realizing sense of the awful siege that their beloved, far away Jerusalem was soon to pass through ; Jeremiah hiding his linen girdle in the hole in the rock or visiting the potter at work on his two wheels — a story the meaning of which is far otherwise impressive and hopeful than the theologians have made it to be, — interesting parables like these abound in the

prophets, and to tell them to the children, as stories, while they are young, is the best of all introductions to a very sublime collection of literature, of far-reaching ethical import not only, but of the highest æsthetic value.

The prophets, indeed, were almost entirely dependent upon the story form, and their histories are simply long stories. First Samuel, for instance, is one great story, and not in any modern acceptation of the words either a history or a biography. It is one of the most fruitful books in the Bible, whether for the mother, the teacher, or the minister, and from it we learn, among other things, the true character of all the Bible stories, which is to give religious meaning to all the experiences of life, even of the life of the little child. We know what great use our Lord Jesus made of the story. Probably those parables which we have in the Gospels are only a selection from a wealth of these incomparable stories.

It is important at the outset of any study of the Old Testament stories to seek the reasons which actuated Jesus as well as the ancient prophets in using almost exclusively this method of teaching. One reason doubtless was that the story is peculiarly well adapted to present truth to the Oriental mind. The Hebrew people, even more than other Orientals, were especially fond of story in

all its forms, — parable, apothegm, proverb, — carefully worked out to a high artistic finish. Another reason lies in the purpose of the story. Its design in Scripture is the design of all Scripture, — to set forth the essential relationship between God and man, and to show it as a working relationship, capable of being realized in practice. Again, as has already been seen, the purpose of the story is not to fill the mind with facts, but to set it to thinking. All these, but especially the last, are important considerations for the mother who "tells stories" to her children. When the story-telling hour comes, and she asks herself how she shall choose between the stories that she knows or can invent, let her ask herself which of them will best appeal to that marvellous thought apparatus the exercise of which is to the children so thrilling a delight. I do not mean which has the best moral, but which best sets in motion that incomparable machinery.

Very important is the stimulus that stories give to constructive imagination. For example, the great vision on the Mount of Olives, in the twenty-third chapter of Matthew, belongs in a sense to the story form, and dwelt upon as we dwell upon the story it stimulates the constructive imagination and gives a boundlessly large view of life and of the great plan of God.

The story is particularly valuable because it makes truth attractive. I am not now referring to fact but to truth. The truth, for example, that no pagan is necessarily excluded from the household of God is not particularly interesting to the thoughtful mind. But embody it in the story of Ruth, and how beautiful, how picturesque, poetic, pathetic, dignified a truth it becomes! And though upon the mind of the little child the story will properly make a larger impression than the truth, yet it is a seed truth which needs only the normal degree and kind of care to spring up in the mind of any boy or girl and fructify in that comprehensive interest in the human race which must underlie all future civilization. Had the story been thus treated by our pious ancestors, their children would not have been agitated by the question whether Socrates and Plato might possibly be saved; and foreign missions would have been put upon a more enduring basis than that idea which resulted in calculations as to how many "heathen" are "dropping into hell" per minute. Moreover, had this story of Ruth and that other story of Jonah been understood by the early Church, the sorrowful story of the Jews in Christian lands would never have been told.

The story form appeals to all ages and all grades of mind. Savage and sage enjoy the same tale,

though the one may find in it rich values undreamed of by the other. For the same reason it is particularly well adapted for conveying spiritual truth. The power of man with God is a spiritual truth of unfathomable profundity; but the theologian or the philosopher has not lived, and perhaps never will live, who will put it more intelligibly and forcibly than it was put ages ago in the story of Jacob wrestling with the angel at the brook Jabbok, a story which the youngest child will delight to hear and to think about.

In other words, the great value of the Old Testament stories lies in the fact that they put abstract truth into concrete form, to be interpreted by the imagination. It is many years since Horace Bushnell, — to whom the religious thought of to-day, and especially the child nurture of to-day, owes so much, — taught an uncomprehending people that "the gift of God in the Holy Scriptures is a gift to the imagination"; that in it that which is given to faith "is put forth in some fact, form, or symbol, to be interpreted by the imaginative insight." The whole Bible, he said, is in one sense pictorial, "its every line or lineament is traced in some image or metaphor." In it "all the past is taken up in metaphor for the future." Thus the story of Cain and Abel is worth a volume on the sin of murder. The story of the Good Samaritan has

become the universal symbol of neighborliness, and to say that Jesus is the great metaphor of God involves no irreverence.

There are no stories in any language, or of any age of the world, which so aptly and precisely perform this function as the Bible stories, and this for a very simple reason, — the language in which they were originally written, the Hebrew, like the child's language, has no abstract words. All Hebrew words are concrete, just as the little child's words are. This explains the splendor of the metaphors in the Old Testament and its rich poetic imagery. The poetic imagery of the Old Testament is often perplexing to grown people, especially of Occidental lands. It continually leads astray theologians, who have even yet not learned from Dr. Bushnell that "in our non-use or abuse of this instrument [the imagination] a great part of our religious difficulties have their spring." It also leads astray the plain people, who, having outgrown the poetry of childhood, have become prosaic without having found their way into the realm of the abstract. But this imagery never puzzles the little child, unsurprised as yet by the experiences of life; that is to say, poetic imagery never puzzles the little child until we begin to explain it to him. Then perhaps it may.

V

Now it is precisely the child nature of Israel that makes those parts of the Old Testament which we call historic so much more intelligible to the children than they are to us. The child of eight is in far deeper and more accurate sympathy than his mother with Gideon and Samson and David, with Jacob and Rebecca and Joseph, because all these are elemental natures, simple, dominated by a single but imperative motive. His parents are too self-controlled; they have gone too deep into the complex problems of life as it now is, and character as centuries of civilization have formed it, to have any very real sympathy with characters of this kind. Thus, though ferocity is repugnant to all adults of refinement, the ferocity of some of the Old Testament stories is not repugnant to our little children, and we mistake if we refuse to tell them these stories because of their supposed demoralizing tendency. To the little children they are not demoralizing. It is thoroughly natural and in a sense proper for children to pass through a stage of ferocity. That marvellous science, embryology, teaches us that the unborn child in its nine months of prenatal existence goes through the

entire history of the development of sentient life; and this discovery is now leading us to the more important psychological truth that the mental and spiritual faculties of man have an analogous history, and we do a serious injury to the children when we refuse to leave room for their natural development. We do them an injury which the unscientific mothers of a past generation were saved from doing their children, because they left them much to themselves, and did not insist upon sedulously studying and minutely guiding them in every hour of their little lives. And so their minds grew normally, as the tree grows in the open field, not as it grows in a dense forest or in a Japanese garden.

The mental development of every child naturally repeats the mental history of the race, and in its first years it has not only the strong poetic nature conspicuous in all primitive peoples, but also that instinctive ferocity through which the race has necessarily passed. It was a true impulse which gave to nursery lore the grewsomeness of the ogre and the retributive justice of Jack the Giant-Killer, the machinations of the wicked stepmother and the heartlessness of the older sisters, with all the pains and penalties they brought upon themselves. And those editors of child literature make more than one mistake who

carefully expurgate these features from the folk tales which are the rightful heritage of the children. Better a thousand times, not only on literary but on moral grounds, the revengeful dwarfs and the murderous giant-killer and the contemptible older sisters of the old nursery tales than the golliwogs and goops and nonsense rhymes with which our nurseries are flooded. Not that pure nonsense has not also its place there. The little child's sense of humor is surprisingly fresh and keen. It sees real fun in things which to its parents are simply absurd. But the function of nonsense is very limited, and its tendency is precisely the opposite of that of folk-lore, deadening instead of nourishing the imagination.

Yet it is certainly true that as in the unborn child the history of myriad ages is repeated in two hundred and fifty days, so in the child nature the period of ferocity is perceptibly shortening; and it is precisely here that the Old Testament has a high value as a classic for children, because the interest of the story does not centre in the ferocity and other indications of a low moral standard, but in that God-consciousness which is so marvellously the essential characteristic of the Old Testament from its first word to its last. If Samuel hews Agag in pieces, he hews him in pieces before the Lord. If Jehu exterminates the

posterity of Ahab, it is his zeal for Jehovah that motives the sanguinary policy, as it also motives Elijah's slaughter of the priests of Baal. Even that excessively difficult story of the bears that tore the forty-two children who had been disrespectful to Elisha very clearly has a religious motive, so obvious to the children that we never find any little child shocked by the moral implication of the story. It served the children right.

By this God-consciousness it is that, meeting the child at every period of its development on its own ground, — its love of poetry, its faculty for wonder, its elemental passions, its rudimentary moral standards, — the Old Testament never becomes outworn as the nursery tales do, but by its constant appeal to that most universal of all faculties, — the religious faculty, the capacity for knowing God, — it is always, after all, in advance of the child, always at the same time satisfying and stimulating its enlarging powers, fulfilling, not destroying, as our Lord said. So the Old Testament always presents itself to the children as a book the chief function of which is to make them good. As Matthew Arnold says, the book is pervaded by a noble "passion for righteousness," a passion as vigorous and compelling to-day as it was three thousand years ago.

Just here, I fancy, some of my readers will part

company with me. They are thinking of Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac, of Lot's willingness to debase his daughters to save the honor of a guest, and of Joshua's attempt to exterminate the Canaanites, and they do not find that it meets the difficulty to admit that the Old Testament portrays man in his elemental nature, and not as the product of generations of a more or less artificial civilization. It may, perhaps, help them over the difficulty to search for the moral ideas inherent in these stories. Is not the impulse to heroic self-sacrifice the very first motive of intense love? Is not the claim of hospitality proved by the entire history of primitive peoples to be the first of all social claims, transcending even the tie of blood? And is the impulse to destroy those who are not of one's own religious faith, those who do not worship *our* God, entirely wanting in the Christian heart? Whence come denominational exclusiveness and trials for heresy? To quote again from the Rev. Newton Hall: "It might be considered questionable taste on the part of scholars who belong to nations which believe in expansion by means of the Gatling gun and repeating rifle to criticise the ethical tone of the Old Testament. The campaigns of Joshua and the exploits of the allies in China would compare well in parallel columns. The hosts of Christendom could even

give the Israelite warriors points on the artistic finish of certain forms of atrocity. . . . The Bible student will find, however, together with the horrors of war, a passion for holiness, a simplicity, a tenderness, a faith, unmatched in history. . . . When this study is made with sympathy, it will be found that the Bible is the faithful record of the struggle of two adverse forces, the human nature, savage, brutal, domineering ; the divine nature, at work upon the lower force, with infinite persistence and patience. The story is of a divine evolutionary force steadily making for righteousness. If your history of the movement is to be truthful, you can no more leave out the hoof and claw and nail than you can leave out the holy aspiration which sought God and found him."

The low ethical standards of the Old Testament characters have far too often been made, by those who ought to know better, an excuse for neglecting the book. The excuse is utterly superficial. We do not so judge modern writers, nor refuse to read books embodying characters whose ethics we repudiate. Alas ! we do not always refuse them to our children.

The value of the Old Testament is not that certain things are excluded from it, but that God is always in it. So we return to the proposition that it is especially valuable for children, because

it introduces God to them from their own point of view. The Hebrew intellectuality most closely resembles that of a child, — his mental activity small, his spiritual susceptibility deep, and his physical sensibility acute. The Hebrew made no analysis of life ; like the little child, he took it as he found it, without self-consciousness or worldly aspiration. The Hebrew idea of God in the early stages of Hebrew history was very crude, but it was very true. It was the child's idea of his father, — of course he is the greatest man in the country ! We smile at this ancient Hebrew conception, because our study of anthropology makes us precisely understand the origin of the Hebrew God-idea. It would be good for us to go back sometimes and think the thoughts of our children after them. It would hardly be a less marvellous achievement than that of Kepler, when, discovering the three great laws of the starry heavens, he exclaimed in a transport of holy awe, "I think thy thoughts after thee, O God ! "

For all the mother's study of the child nature, whether in the Old Testament or in the precious lives which God has put into her arms, must bring her back to our Lord's assertion that "of such," and not of the culture or the scientific attainments or the works of piety of grown-up

Christians, but of such as is the little child, is the kingdom of God. Not the theologian but the mother must restore the Old Testament to the coming age. As the affectionate but philistine championship of "our old mother's Bible" has done more to undermine its authority and suspend its use than any criticism, however destructive, so it is the bright and cultivated young mothers of to-day, with the little children intrusted to their care, who must bring back to the American people that God-consciousness which is the priceless gift of the Old Testament Scriptures.

CHAPTER II

THE MORNING STORIES

I

In telling Bible stories to the children, or, in fact, in telling them any stories, the important preliminary is to get the children's point of view. Happily, this is above all things easy with the Old Testament stories, because, as has been seen, the child's viewpoint is precisely their viewpoint. As the morning light of life is reflected from the face of the little child, so the stories of the Old Testament, especially its oldest stories, which we find in Genesis, reflect the morning light of the world. That blind preacher, Dr. George Matheson, of Edinburgh, whose spiritual insight seems to have grown brighter as the outer world has grown dark around him, lately wrote, — perhaps with Herder's saying in mind, — that the Bible stories belong to the early hour of the day, because they are portraits painted by the morning light. Therefore, that mother is very happy whose circumstances permit her to gather her little ones around her in the early morning,

to give consecration and meaning to the plays and the little duties and trials of the day, by telling them a Bible story. Perhaps the solution of the problem of family prayers may lie here, especially in country homes. The hurried breakfast over, and father and older children sent away to business and to school, why should not the mother ransom from the complicated occupations of her own day, a few minutes for the spiritual sunshine of the very little ones? Happy the nursery into which the consciousness of God's presence comes with the morning sunlight!

Morning stories are these Old Testament stories also, because of the freshness of their nature feeling. We find this in the very first chapters of Genesis, and it grows upon us in the patriarch and hero tales and some of the later stories. And as in all childlike natures delight in the sensible world is closely allied with high spiritual exaltation, so it was with the Hebrew people. Clearly, it was because the childhood of this people was perennial, lasting on through generations, that their spiritual capacity became so deep. "Heaven lies about us in our infancy." To the Hebrew it was ever close at hand.[1] It was no strange thing to him that messengers of God came

[1] I have borrowed this and what immediately follows from my "Studies in Old Testament Literature."

and went familiarly between earth and that near sky in which God dwelt, like the shepherd who guards his sheep, spreading out the heavens as a tent to dwell in.[1] It was as much in the natural order as any other event of life. The Hebrew had no more a conception of natural law than a child has, and he received the miraculous interventions of God in his daily life as a child received his father's gifts, not with surprise or a sense of mystery, but as his way of looking after the well-being of his child.

We have already seen that this is one reason why the Old Testament is so important a book for the child; that it puts him from the first into normal relations with God. It is even more valuable to the growing boy and girl, not only as a means for keeping them in these relations, but also as a key to human nature and to the ways of man with God. For these purposes those wonder tales of the Bible which we find so impossible to square with our scientific knowledge, and therefore feel tempted to slur over, are most important. The scientific teaching of the school of to-day soon brings the growing boys and girls to doubt or deny the possibility of miracle, unless as little children they instinctively received the high spiritual impression of these wonder tales

[1] Isaiah xl. 22.

and have been gradually led to apprehend their meaning by that "graded system" of telling Bible stories presently to be described. To children thus taught it will be a simple thing to explain the significance of miracle as they come to the study of mythology in school, and about the same time to the elementary study of physics. It will be easy to show them that just as myth is the instinctive attempt of all peoples to explain the processes of nature, so with the Hebrew people, who so vividly realized God in all their lives, miracle was the natural way of explaining those wonderful events in their own experience, or in that of their nation, which were out of the ordinary course of things, and for which they could find no other explanation. To the youth thus taught in childhood, the argument against the Bible that "miracles simply do not happen" will be as irrelevant as it is obviously untrue. From the Hebrew point of view they do happen, they happen to all of us; and the experiences of his own life are least inexplicable to the man who, early acquainted with these stories which, more than any others in the world's literature, give a true impression of the character of God, has come to understand the cardinal teaching of Jesus, that he who does not receive the kingdom of heaven as a little child cannot enter therein.

II

A recent writer on our present subject lays rather strong emphasis on the theory that in telling the children Bible stories one should select first those that have to do with children, beginning with the childhood of Jesus, going on to the stories of little Samuel and the boy Joseph, and perhaps the young king Josiah and the Greek-Hebrew boy Timothy, who knew the Scriptures "from a child," and afterward taking up the narratives that relate to older people. There is something in the idea, for it is almost a psychological law that people of whatever age are chiefly interested in other people of their own age. A gray-haired woman is impressed if not solaced by observing that nearly all the women she meets are becoming gray; young girls can give every detail of the dress of the girls they meet; and young matrons are naturally drawn to the matrons of their own standing. Especially is this the case with the child. In the company of a score of people the two who are children, even though strangers to one another, will be oblivious of the presence of any persons except their two little selves. So far as this is true the method proposed might be of value — I am not sure that it would

be — if the Bible actually were, as many are gravely insisting, simply a book like other books; but its character as the sacred literature of a child people precludes the necessity of this principle of selection. All the stories are indeed not equally well adapted to children of various ages, but the test of their suitability is certainly not the age of the hero of any one of them. In fact, generations of experience have established the contention that no stories between the covers of the Bible make such quick appeal to the very little child as those which we find in the early chapters of the book of Genesis, those "morning stories," which we have now to consider.

To the thoughtful reader, who has penetrated the almost unfathomable religious and theological meaning of these stories, this must be a matter of surprise, unless he also apprehends their literary character, the literary class to which they belong. For assuredly, no child mind can possibly fathom to their depths the theological and psychological meaning of these narratives. No child mind could apprehend anything of their meaning were it not clothed in precisely the form of that class of stories which most strongly appeals to him, — the form, that is, of folk-lore.

Let not the word awaken surprise or arrest of sympathy. A moment's consideration will show

us that these stories must at least have been folk-lore at one time, for, at whatever date they were written, they must in the nature of things have been, either a pure invention of the writer, or else stories handed down from lip to lip. They certainly must have been thus handed down for many hundreds of years before Moses, if he it was, or any one else, committed them to paper, and this is folk-lore. Even a superficial study must show that they are folk-lore still.[1]

As one who tells Bible stories to a child must

[1] An illustration of the development of folk-lore from tradition is given by a comparison of the canonical with the Apocryphal Gospels. The first three Gospels in the New Testament give unmistakable evidence of being based upon a widespread and carefully formulated oral account of the sayings and doings of Christ. They were committed to writing (writing being then a commonly practised art) before these memories of Jesus had degenerated into fanciful legend. How fanciful were the legends into which oral traditions did degenerate in regions to which the canonical Gospels did not early penetrate, is made interestingly evident in a recent publication, — "The Apocryphal and Legendary Life of Christ," by J. de Q. Donehoo (Macmillan). In it are woven together, in a series of consecutive chapters, all that can now be rescued of widely accepted stories about Jesus, current in the early centuries in regions into which the authorized Gospels were slow to penetrate. In most cases they were kept from actually becoming folk-lore by the eventual dissemination and the intrinsic authority of the Gospels. How near they came to becoming folk-lore, the history of Christian art makes clear.

for the time being see things as a child sees them, must think, if I may use the expression, with the heart of a child, so it is of no less vital importance to beware of reading into these stories anything which the child will one day have to unlearn. Not that we should practise what our Roman Catholic brethren call "the economy of truth." On the contrary, we should above all things take care to be profoundly and unswervingly truthful; but we should not attempt to teach a little child all the deep significance of any of these narratives. We should simply tell the stories, taking especial care not to weave into them anything that is not there, while we delay till a more mature age the task of unfolding to them much that our maturer experience and study have shown to be there. Telling Bible stories, as has already been suggested, must be to some extent a graded system, and it is the purpose of this book to show how largely a graded system of story telling may be made to subserve the spiritual development of the boy and girl. And it is to develop them spiritually, not to store their intellects, that we tell them Bible stories.

To the very little child the story should simply be told as the folk-tale that it is, with no thought of whether it is or is not true, or in what sense it is true, or what it means. To my mind it is a

great error, which does not in the least meet the true requirements of criticism, even supposing that criticism had anything to do with the children's Biblical knowledge, to treat the early narratives of Genesis as Professor Bennett has done is his otherwise valuable book, "Bible Stories retold for Children." He begins where most conservative as well as all advanced scholars agree that authentic history begins, with the Exodus ; and at the close of the history he adds a chapter of the early narratives of Genesis as "some of the stories which had been handed down from the ancients." But this method robs these stories of their most precious character. There is far more in them than in ordinary folk-lore, and their meaning is of another order. The tiny child has no use for the meaning of either. Let him hear the Bible stories as he hears fairy tales and nursery rhymes and "Uncle Remus" and Tennyson. He will feel the difference, because God is in all these and not in those, — not even in poetry as it is in these stories, — and his soul spontaneously rushes forth to meet God wherever he finds him. The mischief is not in giving him these stories in his earliest years as true, but in not showing him what is their truth, as he becomes able to receive it. It is essential that they should become familiar stories, a part of his mental make-up, before he is old enough for the

interpretation. When he has heard a story so often that every detail is perfectly familiar to him, when he "knows it by heart," in the best sense of the words, then, when he is about five years old, one may begin to unfold to him its marvellous meaning. And this unfolding may be a gradual process, lasting over years of the child's life, and making the story more wonderful and interesting as years go on. Thus he will be prepared to learn, at the proper age, how the story came to be what it is, and why, and thus, side by side with his growing apprehension of God, and of his own relation to God, he will by degrees learn something of the true character of the Bible as a revelation of God. And thus the mother may avoid that very easy, and — alas! — very disastrous mistake of giving the child a false notion of what the Bible is as revelation. Revelation is certainly not a communication of facts otherwise not discoverable by human intelligence, though so enlightened and thoughtful a man as Dr. Horton of London did say so.[1] It is rather a communication of the Spirit of God[2]; and the earlier we make our children understand this, the more rewarding will be our own work with them.

I have already quoted Matthew Arnold as saying

[1] "Revelation and the Bible," by R. F. Horton, D.D.

[2] Edmond Stapfer.

that the Bible is pervaded by a noble sense of righteousness and an intense belief in the reality of a moral order in the world. This is particularly the case in the earliest narratives in Genesis, our "morning stories." If we can make the children early understand the truth about the Bible, they will be in no danger of making a fetich of it, on the one hand, nor, on the other, of committing the capital blunder of supposing that truth is identical with fact, and hazarding their confidence in the Bible with every new discovery of advancing science.

Matthew Arnold gave an important clue to the character of the Old Testament when he said that with the Hebrews, as shown in all its pages, religion was not a part but the whole of life. This explains St. Paul's charge against the heathen, that God was not in all their thoughts. That He was in some of them, had some part in their life, was not to be disputed, but this did not suffice. All life, to the Hebrew, was religious, and it is this point of view that makes the Old Testament so valuable a book for children. When we come to discover in it not only poetry and prophecy, parable and proverb, but humor and sarcasm, pun and fable, yes, and fiction and folk-lore and myth, — for all these are in the Old Testament, — then we must perceive that it was just because God

was in *all* the thoughts of the Hebrew writers that they found no incongruity in bringing all sorts of things into Scripture. The superior and unique religious value of the Old Testament over the religious books of other nations, however advanced in thought and aspiration, is not that certain things are excluded from it, — the more we study it the more amazed we become on finding that nothing is excluded from it, — but that God is everywhere in it, whatever may be the literary form in which the thought of God is clothed. The Hebrew muse, as a French writer[1] says, is always religious. Moses the first poet is brother of Aaron the first priest.

The first eleven chapters of Genesis contain a series of most valuable stories. *They are not history*, and the great difficulty with the theology of all churches is that they have been read and explained as history, the theologians of the early Church not having apprehended the value of the story as a means of imparting religious truth. It would seem as if they might have learned it, not only from our Lord, but from the prophets, from Nathan down. Many modern writers have made this discovery, notably Dr. Henry van Dyke, in his Christmas story of "The Other Wise Man," included in the volume entitled "The Blue

[1] Plantin.

Flower." But the early stories of Genesis are supremely valuable to this end, because it was the special function of Israel[1] "to set forth a knowledge of the righteous action of a righteous God and of the right human attitude to Him." These narratives show God active in the natural world, in the world of human action, and in each soul of man; and though it is certain that those who handed down these tales did not understand God as the prophets and our Lord Jesus Christ understood Him, yet it was the same God, and not another, whom they knew. And we must bear in mind, especially in teaching the children, that it is God, not the Bible, who is the object of our faith.

III

Genesis ii. 4b–25

Let us open the Bible at the second chapter of Genesis, leaving the first for a later moment, and imagine ourselves telling a child of three years the story which begins with the second part of verse four. In telling it we remember that a story is not history, and that the difference between them is not that one may be fictitious and the other is true, but that the one appeals to the

[1] Henry Osborn Taylor, "Ancient Ideals."

imagination and the emotions and the other to the sense of record and of scientific explanation, not yet awake in the child's mind, though soon to awaken there. Evidently, therefore, the question whether or not the story is true is not at all to the point. The point with any story, true or fictitious, as Dr. Sanders has said, is, What do we get out of it? Is it a good story and worth the telling? This Genesis story surely meets the test. It is a good story. It would be difficult to find or invent any story with a wider horizon, one more enlarging to the little mind, or which more beautifully sets the constructive imagination at work. As we all know, it is the story of the creation of man, or, as some writer has called it,

THE STORY OF THE FIRST-BORN

Once upon a time this world in which we live was not like what it is now. There were no grass or trees or flowers. There was nobody living on the earth to take care of the grass and the flowers. There had never been any rain to make the flowers grow. Then God made a soft warm mist to come, just as it comes now sometimes, in the summer mornings. And the mist made the ground soft and warm, so that the little seeds could grow. For God had hidden away many

little seeds in the earth, and they were waiting till He sent His mist to call them to spring up and make grass and flowers.

Now God loved the grass and flowers that were going to grow up from the seeds, and He didn't want them to grow untended; so He took some dust of the earth and made a man, and He breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul. And the man was God's dear child, because God had breathed a soul into him. Every little child and every grown person has a soul, and so we are all God's dear children.

Then God made a beautiful garden, to be a lovely home for that man. There was a great river flowing through the garden to keep it fresh and cool, and the garden was full of trees and flowers and plants, pleasant to the sight and good for food. And the tree of life was in that garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. God used to come to that garden to be with the man, and the man was very happy, taking care of the grass and the flowers and the trees, and talking with his father, God. He ate the fruit that grew in the garden. He might eat any kind of fruit he liked, except that which grew on one tree. That was the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. God had told him not to eat any of its fruit, for He wanted to teach him to obey.

The man did not want to eat the fruit of the knowledge-of-good-and-evil tree, for he loved to obey his father, God.

But the man was alone in that garden, and God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone, I will make a help-mate for him." So first of all God made the beasts, — cows and horses and dogs and cats and all the animals, — and He brought them to the man and asked him to name them, for God likes to have us help Him, just as mother likes to have you help her. The man's name was Adam. So Adam got acquainted with all the animals and he gave them all names, just as you name kitty and doggy and the horse and the chickens sometimes, and the birds that you like best. Adam must have been glad to have the animals near him in the lovely garden.

And yet Adam sometimes wished for somebody else to be with him besides the cow or the horse. Even the kitty and the dog did not always satisfy him ; he wanted God to give him some one like himself to live with him, just as you want God to send you a baby sister or brother.

One day God made the man fall sound asleep, so sound asleep that he did not know what was happening. Then God took a part of Adam's side, one of his ribs, and made a woman of that rib. When Adam waked up there was the woman God

had made to be with him! Do you not think Adam must have been glad to see her? And when he knew that this woman was a part of his very own self, and a child of God, just as he was, he loved her very much. He said, "She is bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh!" No creature could be nearer and dearer to him than that. Adam was very glad to have the woman to be his true companion, just as your little brother or sister is more truly your companion than doggy or kitty. Adam called the woman Eve, and Adam and Eve lived together in that beautiful garden. They were very happy, for they loved to take care of the garden, and they loved one another, and they loved God.

Such a story as this may be told to the youngest child that understands language, and its little soul will be filled with beautiful imaginings upon which it may feed for all time to come, and which will never need to be revised or corrected. For though it will later learn in school some things which are not in this story about the origin of the physical earth and of man, it will learn nothing which contradicts this story, which is a true story though not a narrative of fact. By this one story, oft and oft repeated, as the child demands that every story should be, its little mind comes

to grasp great fundamental truths: that everything that goes on in this world is due to the initiative and the continued interest of God; that the loving sympathy of God extends even to inanimate nature, of which trees and grass and flowers are a symbol; that man is in a special sense a child of God; that God loves to have, and in a sense needs, his help; that people are bound together in peculiarly dear relations because they are all children of God. The creative power of God, His providence as the expression of His being, which is love, the filial relation of man to his Maker, and the solidarity of the human race are all unfolded in this little folk-tale which a very baby enjoys. Have we not here all the framework that is needed for the larger and ever larger instruction of the growing child? Within this framework no truth of physical science, of theology, or of social ethics need find itself cramped or contradicted.

Who can imagine a more delightful exercise than that of gradually unfolding to the eager, unspoiled mind of the growing boy or girl the great truths that lie here in embryo? So doing, the mother will never make the mistake of teaching her child that this story is a narrative of historic fact which he must believe, or reject the authority of the Bible. The great truths which

it embodies have overshadowed the relatively trivial question of fact, and there will be no difficulty in admitting to the boy that which he will instinctively have perceived, — that its character and its construction show it to be an old folk-tale, told by mothers to their children and by heads of clans to their followers for generations before the art of writing came into existence.

Happily, this account of creation in the second chapter of Genesis has never been made a matter of orthodox belief. It fundamentally differs from the first chapter in its conception of creation, as I am sure the reader has perceived, perhaps for the first time. The first chapter, besides its vantage of position, is so marvellous a piece of literature, so grand in its diction, so profound in its simplicity, that it must almost inevitably have crowded the other story out from the field of vision as a narrative of creation. My readers were probably taught in Sunday-school that the second chapter is an amplification of some parts of the first, but it is hardly necessary here to contravene such a statement. Not only is the existence of the world taken for granted in the second chapter, not viewed as called into being by the creative word of God, as in the first, but the original earth is conceived of as dry and waterless, not a chaotic mass of waters; man is created before

the animals and even before vegetation, and he is not created male and female, as in the first chapter, but man alone, and woman made from himself to be his companion, only after he has found the companionship of the animals inadequate to make him happy. What more impressive protest could possibly have been given to man against regarding woman as a mere beast of burden and minister to gratification? What more impressive teaching can be ingrained in the consciousness of the developing boy? "Something better than his dog, a little dearer than his horse"? Nay, but a little lower than the angels, as let man never forget that he himself was made. Let no one who tells Bible stories stultify the child's intelligence by confusing these clear distinctions or defraud his moral sense by ignoring these far-reaching implications.

IV

Genesis i. 1—ii. 4[a]

The consummate value of the first chapter of Genesis is entirely other than that of any subsequent story in these first eleven chapters, and it appeals to a different set of powers in the child's mind. Yet there is no reason why this chapter should not be told to the very youngest children,

if only it is told *as another story*, and no attempt is made to weave the two into one. In fact it is another story. It is difficult to conceive of a grander appeal to the child's noblest possession, the faculty of constructive imagery, than that of the first two verses of this chapter, — God independent of all things, God creating all things, not by a majestic word, but by long loving brooding over these primal elements which he has called into being. There is room in this story for that evolutionary hypothesis which is now generally accepted, and which, however much it may and doubtless will be modified with the progress of thought and discovery, will probably persist in its fundamental elements. And I know two little children four years old, whose eyes sparkle and grow dark, and whose breath draws deep, as they tell how once upon a time every place and every place all through the sky was full of star dust, and how God set it whirling and whirling until first one round world whirled off and went dancing along the path that God had bidden it follow, and then another and another and another, until all the sky was full of whirling worlds, all dancing along in the paths God bade them follow. And how one of these whirling worlds was going to be this world that we live in, and how God's Spirit brooded over it as the mother bird broods over her nest, until

it was made ready to be a world that animals and people could live in. And the children go through all the six creation days, describing one by one the marvellous things that happened at the word of God, and God saw that they were all good. And so the heavens and the earth were finished, and God appointed a day of rest. This is why we have our happy Sundays, when we may think about God more than we do on any other day, because we are resting from our everyday plays, just as He rested when He had finished making all the worlds and the sun and the stars and the animals and people.

Such large, such infinite conceptions are not too large for the soul of the baby girl and boy, because God has put eternity in their heart. It is almost inconceivable the wrong parents do their children when they try to pin the story down to scientific statement, and say precisely thus and thus, in six days, from Monday to Saturday, was the world made. The children will learn something of science when they go to school, and will soon tell their mother that they know better than that. But in fact there is no controversy between science and this chapter, simply because this chapter has no more to do with science than any other poem has.

> The spacious firmament on high,
> With all the blue ethereal sky,

> And spangled heavens, a shining frame,
> Their great Original proclaim.

In fact, there is no firmament, there is no blue sky, there are no spangled heavens; but was Addison wrong? Does not what we see when we look upward — though indeed there is no upward — speak to us of God? The purpose of this chapter is not to show the process of creation but to show God. When the attention is directed to the right things in this account, it no more offends the scientific sense than it offended the devout heart before the day of science.

No, rather, let the child be prepared, as his mind expands, for perceiving that the rudimentary science of his "First Book" has no controversy with his religion, — that is, his apprehension of God and of God's relations with the world, — by being told precisely what is the case with regard to the first chapter of Genesis, and how it came to be put as the magnificent prologue to this Bible which we truly call the Word of God. The chapter is a great canticle of praise, the song of God and the universe. Those expressions that prosaic people have taken to be scientific are pure poetry. Doubtless they are the honest expression of the beliefs of the people of a time before science was. In those days not the Hebrews only, but all thinkers, believed that there was a firmament, — a solid arch

between the earth and the sky, keeping "the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament," preventing the upper floods from falling down and inundating the earth. This is what the writer of the story of Noah believed, and he adds to our knowledge of what ancient peoples actually thought the firmament to be, for he evidently pictured it as full of windows, which God opened when he sent rain. There is much of this conception in the Old Testament. The psalmist refers to the experience of Israel in the wilderness, when God opened the doors of heaven and rained down manna upon them.[1] He also refers to the waters that are above the heavens, that is, the firmament,[2] and again he says that God watereth the hills from his chambers, the beams of which are laid in the waters that are above the firmament.[3] Job tells about a watercourse, or sluiceway, by which the overflowing of the waters pour down upon the earth in rain.[4] These are a far nobler conception than that of the early Greeks, who thought that the firmament was full of holes, like a sieve, and that the daughters of Danæus, trying to draw water in it, continually let some spill through upon the earth. The writer of the book of Job, on the other hand, believed the firma-

[1] Ps. lxxviii. 23, 24.
[2] Ps. cxlviii. 4.
[3] Ps. civ. 13, 3.
[4] Job xxxviii. 25.

ment to be strong glass, "as a molten looking glass" [1] stretched over the earth and held up by the high mountains, as by pillars.[2] The prophet Jeremiah thought of the firmament as something stretched out by the discretion of God,[3] or, as he says in another place, by His understanding,[4] and the Revised Version shows us that Amos had the same idea as the author of Job.[5] None of these writers knew anything of science; the writer of this canticle was concerned only to make the ideas that he and all the world held tell the story of God. And in this splendid poem they do tell that story: they show God as one, while to other peoples He seemed to be many; they show Him as loving man, where as other peoples believed their gods to be jealous of man; they show Him as creating the world to be the congenial environment in which man could grow to be more and more like God.

There will be no need to tell the child that this chapter is not folk-lore like the other story. He felt the difference, as he felt the difference between the stories of when mother was a little girl and those in his book of fairy tales, both of which he found equally, but differently, convincing. Explain to him as he grows older — he will read it soon on the first page of his ancient his-

[1] Job xxxvii. 18. [2] Job xxvi. 11. [3] Jer. x. 12.
[4] Jer. li. 15. [5] Amos ix. 6, R.V.

tory — that all peoples of the world have their stories of how the world was made, and tell him some of them, that he may see how essentially they differ from this one, though in many things they may agree. Tell him then the Assyrian story of creation, which if you do not already know it, you may find in the Biblical Encyclopedia; you will hardly need to show him how like this it is and yet how unlike. Tell him that the Assyrian story is very old; that it was written in a great epic poem, like Homer's Iliad, which his brother or sister or the boys in the high school are studying; and that educated people all over the world in ancient days studied it, as they now study Homer, and believed it to be the best possible conception of the creation — better than that of the Egyptians or the desert tribes or the black people. And yet the people of Israel were not satisfied with it, because it told of many gods, and of their bad actions, their quarrels and fightings, and it taught that the gods sprang out of the world, whereas Israel believed that there was only one God, and that He was perfectly good and holy and strong, and that He made the world, instead of Himself springing out of the world. And so some gifted Israelite, no one knows who, wrote this great poem, the Song of God and the Universe. He drew his ideas of the order of

creation from the great Assyrian epic, which probably Abraham had studied in school before he left Assyria to go to Canaan. He followed it in this respect, for no one knew any better science then; but he left out all those wrong ideas about the gods and how the world was made, putting in true ideas about the one God, the Creator of heaven and earth, and the Father of the souls of men.

Nothing of all this is beyond the comprehension or outside the interest of the growing boy, initiated almost from his first school days into the mythology of Greece and the Norse folk and the rudiments of popular science. And this marvellous poem having been thus explained to him, before he has been taught that science contradicts the first chapter of Genesis, his faith will no more be shaken by such teaching when it comes, nor the chapter robbed of its thrilling appeal to his highest and deepest nature, than any other poem will be robbed of its interest, or his "Aladdin" and wonder tales be made by his science book good for nothing but to be thrown away. I am not putting the Old Testament stories on a par with "Aladdin" and the wonder tales; I am only saying that as regards physical science they are in the same category of entire aloofness, being utterly unrelated to it. And therefore, the scoff-

ing teacher, or the superficial book that may some day tell the boy that his religion, or the authority of the Bible, "stands or falls" with his ability to reconcile geology and Genesis, will be to him as the prince of this world was to our Lord when he approached Him, finding "nothing in Him" to which to make an appeal.

The first chapter of Genesis, seen from this historic and literary point of view, gives the right key to all the other stories of these eleven chapters, the reason why we find them in the Bible. However far back discovery may carry the arts of reading and writing, archæology teaches us that for many generations, probably for thousands of years, while people were thinking on all sorts of subjects, there were yet no means for recording the product of their activity, or at least for disseminating it among the people, except in the memory, — by stories passed down through generations on the lips of those who heard them. We certainly know from study of the North American Indians and other primitive folk, and from the mythologies of all peoples, that all this time the minds of men were tremendously occupied with the mysteries of life and the mysteries of nature. What makes the sun disappear in the evening? A dragon has swallowed it. How does it come back every morning? A god has pierced

the dragon, and set it free. What makes the wind blow? A god is shaking the trees. What makes the sky so beautiful in the morning? A goddess paints the clouds. Why do people die and leave us? The gods are jealous of our happiness, or the people have done some wrong that must be punished. Why does winter come after summer? The dreadful god of the underworld has carried away the fair daughter of the goddess who makes the corn grow, and she has gone to seek her. And so on and on, through the whole cycle of nature and of human life.

These answers we call mythology, and that there is no primitive people, however benighted, without its mythology, however rude, proves that there is no mind so densely ignorant as not to occupy itself in some degree with these dark mysteries. We may be sure that the early clans and tribes who later formed the people Israel were not different from others in this respect. They differed from others, however, in just this : that for the blessing of the world they had been inspired with a marvellous and unique God-consciousness, and they were therefore far more interested and perplexed by the moral and social problems of the world than by its nature mysteries. Whence came sin? Why are crimes against life and property crimes? What is the true relation between man and man? Whence

came the universal law of blood revenge? How arose the tremendous inconvenience of various languages? How came there to be various peoples in the world? Why do good men die?

These problems they attempted to solve, not by nature myths but by historic stories, moulding and remoulding the folk tales that they received from father and transmitted to son as their ideas of God and of human relations became clearer. Doubtless there were scores of these folk tales, problem stories as we may properly call them; and whether the few selected from among the wealth of Israel's folk-lore for the first eleven chapters of Genesis were reworked by the writer of the book or incorporated in it as they came to him is a matter of importance for anthropology and psychology, but is of no moment for the children.

V

This question of folk-lore in the Old Testament is of great importance for the interpretation not only of Genesis but of certain Psalms and of the prophets. The perspicacious reader will find in them much evidence that the minds of even the later writers were saturated with this old folk-lore, just as the minds of cultivated people of

to-day are saturated with the classics of Greece and Rome and of their own language; and more than one disputed theological dogma, more than one mistaken view of the past and the future, is due to failure to discriminate between the literary use of these old ideas and direct religious teaching.

Other parts of the Old Testament show that the minds of the Hebrew writers were greatly occupied with the mystery of creation. To them it was a subject of special interest, because according to their view the history of Israel, the chosen race, began with the creation, God having had Israel in His mind when He began to create the universe. Again and again they recur to the subject, and with no care to make their accounts square with either the first or the second chapter of Genesis. There is a very sublime and most poetical account of creation in Proverbs viii. 22–31, in which the heavenly wisdom is represented as being with God during the creation period, "rejoicing always before him" while the work was going on, and (as a more accurate translation makes it) "sporting in the habitable part of the earth," those parts that He had finished. This account contains allusions to ancient myth, from which the first chapter of Genesis is remarkably free: the "circle upon the face of the depth" is the rim or barrier which the ancients supposed to

encompass the flat disk of the world to keep the ocean from spilling off; and there is a clear reference to the pillars upon which many peoples believed the earth to be founded. A creation story in Job[1] speaks not only of the bounds with which the waters are compassed, but also of the "crooked serpent"; that is, the dragon which every evening swallowed the sun. In this account, along with these mythical ideas, is the sublime conception of the earth hanging upon nothing, to which the concrete Hebrew mind must with great difficulty have attained. More commonly, with thinkers of other ancient nations, the Old Testament writers conceive of the earth as resting upon something, or "founded upon the seas and established upon the floods."[2] There is in the One Hundred and Fourth Psalm a description of creation of exquisite beauty, which not only refers to "the foundations of the earth that it be not removed forever," but contains an extremely picturesque description of the dividing of the waters, entirely different from Genesis i.

The same feeling of the necessity of keeping the sea in its place appears in the book of Job, in a magnificent poem of creation, represented as uttered by God himself.[3] The passage is very clearly poetic; it is one of the most sublime

[1] Job xxvi. 7–14. [2] Ps. xxiv. 2. [3] Job xxxviii.

poems in all literature, and if the mothers of past generations, like the mother of Ruskin, had caused their children to commit it to memory, the first chapter of Genesis would never have been set up as the norm of the creation idea, and the world would have been saved an incalculable amount of controversy.

These creation stories are not for the youngest children, as the first two chapters of Genesis are. It is as they grow older, and have begun to commit poetry to memory, and are studying mythology in school, that the mother should direct their attention to these poems in Job and the Psalms. This is the time for the children to know them, not only because of their sublime language and grand sweep of vision, but also because through them they will gradually perceive the true purpose of the creation stories of Genesis, which they have known since before they can remember. To know God is the beginning of wisdom as well as eternal life, and all these creation stories most effectively reveal God.

VI

But they have also another value, immensely practical, for the young people of college years, when they begin to study philosophy. To most

young people the first effect of this study is extremely disturbing to the mind. It is the first summons that calls them to think abstractly, and outside of the lines in which their minds have hitherto worked. Nothing can possibly be a better preparation for such a course of study than those thoughts of God and of His relation to the universe which these stories embody, provided that as children they have been encouraged to think in freedom and to exercise their minds upon the subject in the various aspects presented by the various accounts. For in them all God is shown to be entirely independent of matter, and yet the very soul and living principle of matter. Neither identified with matter nor confused with it as if material things were an emanation from Him, in all these accounts, however various, God is shown as bringing matter into being by His creative word, and controlling it by an active exercise of will. He speaks and it is done ; he commands and it stands fast. The mother need not try to explain all this to her grown children in terms of the schools. Doubtless they will prove to be more at home in such language than she. But if all these stories, and their true significance, have long been a part of the young people's mind-stuff, she will now perceive that nothing in all their education has been as accurately calculated to give

them a clear conception of unseen things, a sound basis for that collegiate study of philosophy, which is so often unsettling to the faith of the student. The ideas inherent in and common to all these creation accounts, first presented to the mind in early childhood, and permitted to develop freely in the expanding intellect, will prove their best safeguard in those bitter-sweet years when the children are passing out from the shelter of their mother's thought, their mother's faith, and compelled to formulate their own thought and to attain to a faith of their own.

CHAPTER III

MORE MORNING STORIES

Genesis iii.

I

Of all the problems which have exercised the mind of thoughtful man, the problem of sin is the darkest and most perplexing. It is therefore no matter of surprise that an attempt of the Hebrew people to explain this pivotal problem of human life, in the mythical way in which all problems were first explained, should find an early place in Genesis. The story contained in the third chapter, commonly called "The Story of Paradise and the Fall," has indeed a far deeper meaning than has usually been found in it. A title more profoundly expressing its purpose is "The Story of Man's Separation from God," for its essential motive is to explain this problem which underlies the other, since when we realize the presence of God we do not sin. It is the answer to the question, How came it about that we human beings, made in the image of God, with a God-breathed soul, dear to Him, therefore, as His children, cannot always live

in constant, visible fellowship with Him? It would be so easy in that case to be good! And surely that must be the normal, the natural life for beings whose souls are an inbreathing of God!

With the problem of sin, as a problem, the little child has nothing to do, but at an earlier age than the mother deems possible, he has wondered why he cannot see God and hear Him speak. This story of "The Separation of Man from God" tells him why.

For intrinsic reasons it is a beautiful story to tell the little child. It makes immense appeal not only to his constructive imagination, but also to his faculties of awe and love, and to his sense of right and wrong. It is one of the most thoroughly symbolic of all the stories in the Bible, and for this reason also it is a beautiful story to tell the children. For the same reason it is of tremendous importance that as we tell it to them as their very first lesson in practical ethics, we read into it nothing that is not there upon the surface. The story is itself so exquisitely adapted to the early mental processes of a child, that to force it into the service of any theological interpretation is the worst sort of philistinism. But let the mother be most sensitive to all that *is* in this brief but marvellously pregnant story. For example, it was not the *voice* of God, calling His

naughty children, that made them shrink away to hide among the trees, and try somehow to cover themselves with aprons of leaves. It was simply the sound of His footsteps, walking in His garden as He was wont to do, in the cool of the day, that terrified the disobedient pair. To prepare herself for telling any Bible story, the mother needs to read carefully the simple words.

In the nature of things the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, the tree of life, the serpent, are symbolical, if we say not, mythical. But this concerns the little child only as he instinctively feels in the symbol the thing symbolized, and precisely for this reason. The story is all idyllic freshness and beauty until the tragedy comes, and still it is idyllic, as God comes to walk in the garden in the cool of the day, and for the first time His footsteps startle His children into terror instead of awakening joy and glad response, as till then had always been the case. Evidently we are expected to picture to ourselves that until this sad evening Adam and Eve had always run joyfully to meet God when they heard Him walking in His garden, just as children run to meet their father coming home to them in the cool of the day. And there is no little child that does not feel that he would run quick to meet God, if he heard Him coming.

This is not reading into the story something that is not there; it is simply filling in the outline in a natural and inevitable way. The Levitical legislator — a writer of far more imagination than a superficial reading of Leviticus is likely to reveal — saw the truth in the idea, and with evident reference to the paradise story promises that God will walk still among His people, on condition of their obedience.[1] This is the ideal to give to the child as he comes to the thoughtful age.

There is something to be made, even to the little child, of the character of the temptation. Eve saw that the fruit was pleasant to the eyes, and even the baby is attracted by bright color; she saw that it was good for food, and the first impulse of every child is to eat, — to put things into its mouth. Later, the fact that these two desires, both useful and right in themselves, the love of the beautiful and the desire for the useful, are the basal elements of temptation may well be developed, in connection with those other teachings about temptation which will presently be brought forward.

It is a disastrous thing indeed when the mother loses the typical force of the story by teaching her child that the serpent is Satan or that labor is a curse, or indeed that God laid any curse upon Adam and Eve. The story distinctly says none

[1] Lev. xxvi. 12.

of these things. There is nothing, indeed, in all the canonical Old Testament to show that the Hebrew people ever understood the serpent in this story to be Satan. In the Apocryphal book of Wisdom, written after the exile had brought Israel into contact with the Eastern peoples, the serpent is indeed called the devil, though the devil is not identified with this story. The Babylonians and Assyrians had this myth, and the very philosophical Persians, searching for the origin of evil, could only account for it by the belief that two opposing principles ruled the world, the principle of good and the principle of evil. They personified these principles as Ormuzd and Ahriman, and through the influence of these ideas the later Jews came to personify evil as Satan, as is particularly seen in the Apocryphal books. A casual reading of some parts of the New Testament seems to show that their writers identified Satan with the serpent in paradise, and assuredly many of the Church Fathers did so. But with the knowledge of other literatures and other religions, which all intelligent persons of to-day have, and which the Church Fathers were not to blame for not having, it is impossible for any thoughtful reader of the New Testament not to see that such New Testament expressions as identify Satan with the serpent in paradise are purely literary,

not in the slightest degree theological, and designed not to teach a dogma but to illustrate a truth.

Therefore, the mother will be quite beside her purpose if she reads such things as these into this story. The time for explaining why the serpent is here comes later, when the child has studied the mythologies and read some of the folk tales of other nations. Then, too, may come the impressive unfolding of the meaning of the command not to eat of the forbidden tree, and the precise character both of the disobedience and the penalty that it incurred, as I shall try to show. But long before the time for developing the story to this extent, indeed, at the very earliest time of telling the story, the mother can put it upon the plane where her little child stands, if she thinks of it in her own mind, not so much as an answer to the question of the origin of evil, as of that simpler, yet all inclusive question, "Why cannot we see God now, and hear Him speak?"

From this viewpoint she can make far more of the story, both for filling the child's soul with great thoughts and as a means of elementary ethical teaching, than if she had the problem of sin in her mind. For with sin, as sin, no immature mind has by any possibility to do. Goodness and naughtiness the little child knows, and

the happiness of its mother's approving smile and the pain of her reproving frown; and the well-taught child soon comes to feel precisely thus with regard to God; but there is as yet no question in his little heart as to sin, nor, indeed, can be. Yet even thus early his little soul feels instinctively that being the child of God he ought by right to be the companion of God, and this story shows him why it is that God does not live with him as his father and mother do. Though not a word as to the moral necessity of punishment for wrong-doing has ever been said to him, his moral sense perfectly approves of the sentence that Adam and Eve, having disobeyed God, could not go on living in His garden, although the symbolism by which this ethical fact is justified cannot be explained to him till later. But he must be told, right here, that Adam and Eve were sent out of the garden, not because God was angry with them, but because He wanted them to learn, by hard work and trouble, how to be good. And thus setting goodness before the child as the one thing that God cares about, — is it not also the one thing that mother cares about for her children? — it will not be difficult to make him see that hard work and sickness and troubles are just helps to be good. It will even be possible, in case the child has already come to the knowledge

of death, — and in this case it will be most desirable, — to make him see that even dying is nothing to be unhappy about. It simply means that the hard lesson has been learned, and the Father has sent for His child to come home from school to live happy with Him forever. But this part it is not necessary to develop until the time comes. The word *death* does not appear in the Biblical story, nor need it in the mother's account. Though as the child learns that birds and animals die, it may be well to teach him something of the beneficent law of dust to dust, before the time comes to teach him that the spirit returns to God who gave it.

That the third chapter of Genesis is not what children call "a true story" it will never be necessary to explain, any more than we explain that "The Steadfast Tin Soldier," or "The Ice Maiden," is not true. The child understands that perfectly from the beginning. But before very long, as soon, indeed, as he is thoroughly familiar with all its incidents, it will be possible to teach him that the story has a meaning, that the trees and the serpent and the curse stand for something, and this will be a very valuable addition to the categories of his thought. A new set of his faculties will come into delightful exercise when he first learns that the story has been told him

precisely because it has a meaning. Something of this meaning he has already felt: the misery of disobedience, the wrong of listening to any one who asks him to disobey, the woe of being made afraid of God by having disobeyed, the impossibility that naughty people should live in God's garden where He loves to walk, the promise that a naughty child may conquer his naughtiness if he tries, in Jesus' help. Now that he has come to school years the symbolism of this story should be related to what he is learning there. This may easily be done if in his early years the story has been told to him simply, just as we find it in the Bible. He will soon find things in his mythology book and in his book of fables that will make it easy for him to understand that the serpent in this story was a mythical animal, and that it so appears in many primitive legends. At the age when his teacher sends him to the library to look up things it will be well to put this method in practice in connection with his Bible stories, by setting him to find in other parts of the Bible places where the serpent is spoken of in precisely the mythical or symbolic way in which it appears in this story.[1] Later, when he begins his

[1] For instance, Isa. xxvii. 1; Ps. lxxiv. 13, 14; Isa. li. 9; Ezek. xxix. 3, xxxii. 2. It may be well to explain that the word *Rahab* is equivalent to *Egypt*, and *dragon* and *leviathan*

classical studies, he will see in the serpent the truly spiritual and ethical treatment of the common belief of ancient peoples that the gods were jealous of the happiness of men, and continually intervened to make them trouble. How different from the old Hebrew writer's conception of God!

Sacred trees and mythical trees also appear in mythology, and this is the proper time to point out the likeness and the differences between the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and such mythical trees as that which bore the golden apples in the garden of the Hesperides. Here, again, will come the opportunity to show without argument or discussion the true character of the inspiration of the Bible. As the child grows older, and his reading grows wider, he can be taught that though stories of mythical trees abound, — in Persian, Indian, Scandinavian, as well as in Greek folk-lore, — not one of them is

to *serpent*. Egypt itself is sometimes personified as a dragon, see the Ezekiel references. The reference is to the great serpent that nightly swallows the sun. All these expressions refer to the sun myth, and never to the devil. The Ezekiel references and the second in Isaiah are especially telling, since they implicate Egypt, in whose religion Osiris, the setting sun, was nightly swallowed by the serpent, which in turn was pierced by the lance-like rays of Horus, the rising sun, thus setting himself free.

made the vehicle of any teaching as to right and wrong. There is a Persian seal in the British Museum which remarkably suggests this paradise story; for it bears the impress of a tree with a serpent coiled about it and a man and a woman on either side. Until very recently it was believed that this seal indicated that the ancient Persians had tried by a similar story to explain the problem of sin; but now that scholars are better acquainted with the literatures of early Eastern peoples, they find that this is not the meaning of the seal. So far as we know, only ancient Israel attempted at so early a time to explain the dark mystery. Here is the time and place to fortify the mind of the school child against the pernicious idea, too frequently grafted into this story, that God disapproved of knowledge in itself or desired to keep it from man. The serpent suggested this, but the serpent lied. God had no objection to their *knowing*, only to their *disobeying*. The words "knowledge of good and evil" are a comprehensive figure for "all knowledge." And since, as the proverbial writer says, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning," the very foundation, "of wisdom," so this story is meant to teach that true knowledge is possible only to the obedient. The mere prohibition to eat of this tree, by giving to Adam and

Eve their first opportunity to *obey*, laid for them the foundation of all knowledge.

We have seen that the little child has no concern with sin as a problem, though he is concerned with it as a fact. And just as this story is the best possible way of opening to him the sorrowful truth that disobedience is what separates him from God, so as he grows older it should be made the means of opening to him the wonderful mystery of evil overcome by good, moral character developing out of struggle with temptation, ultimate salvation wrought by the perfect obedience of One who, bruising the serpent's head, destroys the power of temptation.

II

In every human life there is a period of innocence, typified by Adam and Eve in the garden. This innocence has no moral character until the opportunity to obey (and consequently to disobey) is given, and it is for the great good of humanity that the innocent human being is led by struggle to attain moral character. In the youngest child, though the period of innocence is not yet past, nor will be for long, the struggle has already begun. To the growing boy, face to face with temptations only half understood, but

bewildering and often agonizing, the happy conviction of his earlier years, that it would be easy to be good if one lived in God's garden, turns to the cruel inquiry, "Why has God not made me to be good? Why has He made me susceptible to temptation?" The mother whose heart is torn with the struggles and the soul-agonizing questions of her child may turn to the simple story which for years he has known by heart, to explain to him that it would not be easy for man or woman, whom God has created free, to be good, even in the garden of God. Even a boy will recognize that the playmate for whom all things are made easy is but a weakling, that the boy from whom all temptation has been removed by the fond foolishness of indulgent parents is no true boy at all. Even a boy will prefer to be left free to choose for himself, at the risk of disastrous mistake. And this story will show him that the Almighty Father's method with His children is precisely the method of wise and loving earthly parents. Even when he was a baby they did not remove from the nursery everything which might possibly hurt him; instead, they taught him not to touch. Yet, at the same time, they put a fender before the fire which might fatally burn him and guards before the window from which he might fall. Now in his boyhood they are giving him

greater freedom of choice, but still they watch over him that he make no fatal error. So God, in His garden, not only laid upon His children a command of irksome obedience, He also permitted a tempter to come in and suggest that the command was unfair and that disobedience was only what was due to themselves. But even then God did not let them go on to fatal sin. Rather, He put them, as the wise father often puts his child, where hard conditions would develop moral strength, and bring out all that was best and noblest in them.

At this age, and not before, let the boy be taught the precise nature of the sentence pronounced by God upon Adam and Eve. *No curse was laid upon them* — emphasize this fact. Punishment they did incur, as every disobedient child must, but we do not want our children to look upon punishment as anything but a blessing. The serpent indeed, the tempter, was cursed, and it is impossible to lay too much stress upon the wickedness of tempting another to do wrong. Yet — though this teaching perhaps may better come even later — the serpent was not treated as a moral being; it was simply for the sake of Adam and Eve that it, equally with the earth, was cursed. The subtlety of the serpent (more properly, the wisdom, as in the Revised Version) made it a dangerous com-

panion for Adam and Eve, since it might find some new way to tempt them to do wrong; and therefore "enmity" was put between them, as the most effectual safeguard. The earth was cursed (only in a figure, for this expression is symbolical, like all the rest), simply as a means of helping Adam and Eve to be good. And the work by which they were thenceforth to earn their living was no more a curse to Adam and Eve than it is now to the schoolboy who is eagerly looking forward to the time when he may begin to do a man's work in the world. Here is the time for the mother to explain to her boy that if work is not a curse, neither are those strong impulses to idleness, to disobedience, to impurity, against which he is called to struggle, and sometimes with such humiliating defeat. They are the tree in the midst of his garden, the opportunity for him to grow in moral strength.

The children know enough of history now to understand when they are told that the sentence pronounced upon Eve, of subjection to her husband, was the tenderest mercy through the long generations of barbarity and semi-civilization, when the protection of a strong man was essential to woman's happiness and to her honor, if not to her very life. And the mother may easily explain to her growing boy, as to her growing girl,

the peculiar sacredness of the tie between her and them, in the sorrow with which she brought them into the world. And now is the time to show them that the fact that it was to Eve, the prototype of motherhood, and not to Adam, that the promise was given of eventual triumph over evil through the Son that should one day be born, raises the sorrowful sentence, as it raises the entire story and the dark problem which it symbolizes, into the brightest region of hope and into the sunlight of a blessed anticipation of ultimate perfection.

It will do no harm to inform children of this age that this blessed hope was not forbidden even to peoples to whom God did not reveal Himself as He did to Israel. They will find in text-books and encyclopædias that in many nations there is a more or less well-developed mythical expression of the hope of a redeemer. It found perhaps its best expression, outside of the Old Testament, among the Assyrian people, who inscribed on their tablets a promise that Merodach (the god Marduk) should be their redeemer. The Babylonians had a similar myth, but both were inextricably interwoven with much that is degrading in polytheistic mythology. To point out to the schoolboy and girl the contrast between these accounts and the simple dignity and pure mono-

theism of this Bible story is to give them a new perception of Biblical inspiration. The time for teaching the symbolism of the exclusion of Adam and Eve from the garden on account of the presence there of the tree of life, and the significance of death as the consequence and penalty of sin, comes not with the study of mythology, but at this later time with the first study of elementary ethics. And then the mother will point out the beneficence of death to one who loves God, by shortening the time of sorrow and pain, limiting them strictly to "the days of life." By sending Adam and Eve out of paradise, away from the possibility that they should "eat of the tree of life and live forever," God saved them from the woe of living forever subject to sin, and gave them death as the glad release.

That it is not an instinct of humanity to regard death as evil, and therefore that it is possible to train our children to look upon it as a blessing to good people, a little reflection will show. Not only are primitive peoples — the North American Indians, for example — without fear of death, but such cultivated peoples as the Hindus and the Japanese are singularly devoid of such fear. The Norsemen called death "*heimgang*," home going, the joyful return of the seafarer from his voyage. We may even see in this attitude toward death

something that seems to whisper that "dust thou art and to dust thou shalt return" was not said to Adam and Eve as a threat, but by way of comfort, being simply a natural fact. No, it is profoundly and far reachingly true that the sting of death is sin, as St. Paul taught; and only those who by the Gospel of Christ and the teachings of the Old Testament have come to some adequate conception of man's relation to God, and therefore of the awfulness of sin, realize this sting.

III

As with the creation stories, so with this story of paradise and the separation from God, there is much that will prove both a light and an anchor to young people in their first serious study of philosophy and ethics. To them the question of temptation is almost as baffling as the question of sin. It comes home to them, indeed, long before this time, though not formulated until now. Very early in the child's life the mother may enforce by this story the teaching which she finds it so often necessary to repeat, that the fact of having been tempted is no valid excuse for having done wrong. "I did it because sister" or brother or playmate "asked me to" is one of the most frequent of nursery excuses. It would be hard to

say at what age it would be too early to teach the little one that a child created in the image of God is not compelled to do wrong simply because it is tempted. The Child Jesus, who is the Model for every little child, did no wrong, though He was tempted just as often as any other child. He did not yield, because even while He was a little child He realized that the child of God ought not to do wrong. This, I submit, is quite as legitimate a lesson to draw from the third chapter of Genesis as the doctrine of original sin, and far more pertinent to the need, not of the child only, but of all humanity. With the theological tenet drawn from this story by St. Paul I have no quarrel. Experience teaches that it is the scientific expression of a very profound truth. But for the practical duty of bringing up a child to be good, it is simply of no value. The mother's task in the moral training of her children is not scientific, but practical; not theological, but religious. What she must look for in the Bible stories is their vital truths, which impress themselves upon the character years before any theological dogma, however well formulated, can meet it at any point. It is the vital truths which inform dogmas, and not accuracy of theological definition, that give whatever value they have to the catechisms children study in childhood. And

these vital truths lie upon the surface of the Bible stories.

Half the battle is fought for the growing boy and girl in their first study of ethics, their first recognition of the problem of temptation as a personal problem, if they have learned from the Bible stories they heard at their mother's knee that temptation is not something inherent in human nature, but is something from without, which, and which alone, is the symbolism of the serpent. Human nature is the nature that God gave to man when He breathed into his nostrils the breath of life ; this fact explains, and is intended to explain, the reason why man is so inexpressibly dear to God, so dear that God is ready to incur suffering, sending His Son to die, to save him from sin. The fact is repeated more than once in the course of these early stories.[1] From this point of view, the inexpressible dearness of man to God, it is even not robbery for him to be equal with God. And this makes it possible for our boys and girls to accept the Man Jesus as the model of their mature lives, as they accepted the Child Jesus as the model of their childhood. If Jesus were not "very man" it would be vain to try to imitate Him. If He were not the ideal man, the man whom the Creator had in mind when He said, "Let

[1] Gen. v. 1, ix. 6.

us make man in our own image," it would be derogatory to any boy's manhood to ask that he should take Him for his model. But being what He was, it becomes the very mainspring of struggle against temptation, to know that it was because from His earliest childhood Jesus had been kept from sin by the realized presence of God, that therefore in the fulness of His young manhood He could successfully resist the tempter. He had had no experience in sinning, and there was no weak point in His moral sense. Thus the promise of God was kept, and the seed of the woman which through all the generations had been bruising the serpent's head bruised it at last fatally. Apprehending this, perceiving to what imitation of his Model he has been called, the youth who yields to temptation will repent of it with that sharp but salutary pain, which has well been called "the pain of not being holy."[1]

In this teaching there is no intention of denying or even of ignoring the divinity of Jesus Christ. The truth of this theological dogma, which is one purely metaphysical, can hardly be controverted by any one who thinks profoundly. But children do not think profoundly, nor have their minds any metaphysical questions needing to be satisfied. Their needs are purely practical,

[1] The late Dean Auguste Sabatier.

and theological truth is of value to them simply for the large thought it awakens in them, the illimitable horizon it unfolds before them. It should not be left out of their training, and it is not left out of the training of children to whom the Bible stories are told. But the time for explaining this truth, even for dwelling upon it, except as a self-evident fact, comes later.

Again, it is possible to teach even the very little child that it does not suffer alone when it does wrong, that parents and playmates must suffer too. Later comes the time for impressing upon his mind that even animals and nature share in the suffering entailed by the sin of man. This is implied not only in the cursed serpent and the cursed ground, but also in the death of the beasts which furnished the skins for clothing. Suffering, death, even of animals, typify the sorrow of God for the sin of man, and this is what St. Paul meant when he pictured all creation, which now is groaning and travailing in pain, as sure to be redeemed from pain when all mankind have been redeemed from sin.[1]

One more thought in the story remains to be developed to the growing children. While they are little no more explanation is needed of the newly awakened sense of shame and the search

[1] Rom. viii. 22, 23.

for clothing than of any other part of the story. *Presentation* is the mother's only task, here as elsewhere, in telling Bible stories to the little ones; explanation comes later. She should wait until self-consciousness has awakened, until the child is at least ten or eleven years old, before undertaking to point out that only the child who has done wrong thinks about himself. The good child thinks of father and mother, of plays and pets, and of other children, of things wonderful and things delightful, but he does not think about himself. And when he has done wrong, and feels ashamed and wants to hide and cover himself up, how little he can do it! The voice of conscience will reach him amid the thickest trees. The fig leaves that Adam and Eve hastily fastened together were no useful covering. It needed that God should come to their help and give them coats of skins.

This is enough for the time, but later, when moral questions assail the growing children, it can be shown them by this story that sin is *never* an act that concerns the sinner alone. Adam thought that he could cover himself with leaves from a tree that had no feeling. God showed him that something must suffer before his sense of shame could be relieved. The animals had to die, that their skins might be used for dress.

Yet is dress not an evil, any more than the moral results of struggle with sin are an evil. These coats of skins were the beginning of civilization, the first manifest good arising from the moral struggle of man.

IV

Some quiet Sunday evening when the children are grown up, the mother may gather together, in free and interesting conversation, all the lessons which, through the course of years, she has brought home to their personal experience, by this graded system of telling the first three stories of Genesis. "That there is one God, that He is a righteous God, that He demands righteousness of His children, and that if they desire righteousness He will forgive their sins and help them to become worthy to be called His children;"[1] that the ideal state of man is to live in the sunlight of God's presence, in the full enjoyment of his physical powers (dressing and keeping the garden), of his intellectual faculties (naming the animals), and of social relations, his happiness depending on his obedience, — these are the religious lessons of these chapters. That these stories did show what the people who told them and the

[1] McFadyen, "The Messages of the Old Testament."

inspired man who committed them to writing actually believed, is the ethical teaching of the chapters. How profoundly this teaching influenced them — for example, that temptation in itself is not wrong — is shown in subsequent stories,[1] such as that of Abraham and of David when God Himself is pictured as the tempter. The later author of Job has a different conception, yet still God is represented as allowing and even as making use of temptation. By the time that Chronicles were written this idea, no longer understood in the truly ethical sense of the old Genesis writer, was repudiated, and Satan was made the tempter of David, and this is interesting precisely as it sets off by contrast the better ethical sense of the earlier writer. That the writer of these chapters had a double object in view — to preserve the traditions of the race and, at the same time, to make them embody the religion of Jehovah[2] — is the historical truth to be drawn from these chapters. That the stories were originally attempts to solve moral mysteries — the mystery of sin, the mystery of death, the mystery of pain, the mystery of separation from God — is the literary truth. And all these so work to-

[1] Gen. xxii. 1; 2 Sam. xxiv. 1, 10 ff.

[2] The proper word is *Jahveh*, but the Revised Version makes the corrupt vocalization current.

gether, at once to prove the inspiration of the book of Genesis and to show the true character of inspiration, as to set the children thus "brought up upon" Bible stories forever beyond the reach of those who attempt to reduce the Old Testament to the level of the scriptures of other peoples.

CHAPTER IV

BEFORE THE FLOOD AND AFTER

Genesis iv. 1–16

I

The story of Cain and Abel contains much for the little child, and like those which precede it should be told to him as nearly as possible in the words of the Bible. The meaning of the story is most profound, yet on its very surface lie two truths which even the youngest story-hearing child understands. The first is that people naturally want to offer something to God. It is the same desire which makes every little child love to help mother (and if he soon outgrows the lovely impulse it is the mother's fault), the same which gives him joy when he adds his penny to the offering in church, knowing — though without understanding how — that he is giving it to God. That was why the shepherd Abel brought some of his little lambs, and the farmer Cain some of his good fruit, for an offering to God. The second truth is in beautiful accord with the child's earliest social instinct; — his delight in watching baby, in

being his brother's keeper; — and though this truth is taught only by the contrast of Cain's repudiation of the duty, the little child's own experience of times when baby seemed a trouble, rather than a joy, makes him understand that too.

He can understand that God was pleased with Abel's offering because Abel was lovingly longing to please, and that He was displeased with Cain's offering because Cain had not "done well." The rest, too, he can understand, dark as is the shadow that rests upon it. When we are naughty we love nobody, not even our own brother. He knows at three years old quite as well as if he were thirty that it is naughtiness that makes him sometimes cross and selfish with his brother, and it is not hard for him to accept, however little he may understand, the fact that the act of Cain in killing his brother was the dreadful outcome of selfishness. A little later the story may be told in fuller detail, though still mainly in the Bible words; and by the time the child is about seven years old the mother should be prepared to answer the questions that will surely arise in his mind, notwithstanding his early instinctive sympathy with the story.

This child will not make the mistake which many wise expositors have made, of supposing that the *things* offered by these brothers had to

do with the "respect" of God for their offering. The mother has not so far departed from the spirit of true Bible story telling as to use the word *sacrifice*, which the Bible does not use, and she has therefore not found it necessary to anticipate the stories of later years with any suggestions of the Jewish sacrificial system or any theological implications of the death of Jesus Christ. It is, indeed, precisely here that Abel's death differs from that of Christ, and his offering from Christ's offering of Himself — they were not *for others*. Abel no more perceived that he was his brother's keeper, than Cain did; and his offering was acceptable to God, not because it was a type of the death of Christ for the salvation of the world, but because it was a gift of love. And Cain's offering was rejected, not because it was of the fruits of the earth, and therefore "unbloody," but because it was not offered in an obedient, that is, a loving, spirit. Each brought precisely what he ought to bring, — that which he had, — and this is the lesson for the child, one which he may carry with him all his life.

Observe — the mother may point it out to her child of ten and even of seven — that the story speaks first of God's interest in the man, and only after that of His interest in the offering. The question was not which gift was most pleasing to

God, but which soul. And here, to the child of ten or twelve, the lesson may be taught which in later years our social system will make it so hard for him to learn, that it is always the soul, and never the circumstances, that measures the worth of man or woman.

How did Cain and Abel know that God was pleased or displeased? The child is sure to ask sooner or later. This is a story and not a bit of history, and the mother is free — nay, is she not compelled? — to answer according to the analogy of the story. In a few minutes we hear of God as talking with Cain, trying to change his heart and make him good; why not believe that He had spoken His approval and disapproval in the same way? Consistency relieves the mother from every effort to give historic truth to her narrative by saying, as some excellent expositors do, that God showed His sentiments by prospering Abel and not prospering Cain; or, as others do, that He spoke to them in their hearts by the voice of conscience. No; let the story be the story that it is, self-consistent throughout. God had told the brothers how pleased He was with Abel and his offering and how displeased with Cain and his offering. Instead of feeling sorry and trying to do better, Cain did as some children do when they are reproved, — he went about sullenly, with a

long face and hanging head. And then God, who was Cain's heavenly Father as well as Abel's, and who wanted him to be good, spoke to Cain and asked him why he acted thus. "Why is thy countenance fallen?" He asked. "If thou doest well, shall it not be lifted up?" So every naughty child's lowering face grows bright, and his head no longer hangs down, when he has decided to "do well" again. "And if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door," crouching ready to spring, wanting to be master over Cain, "but thou shouldest rule over him."

It is hardly too early, at any age, to use the Bible idioms, explaining them a little where the context does not make them clear. We may bear in mind, however, that all idioms, though our usual modes of speaking, are equally foreign to a little child. In general, children take words for granted, and understand them by degrees, as they become familiar with them, and so it will be with the idioms of oft-repeated Bible stories. However, this idiom it will not be amiss to explain, because a very little child will be greatly interested in the explanation, picturing to himself sin lying like a baby lion at the door of Cain's heart. If Cain chose, he could tame the young lion before it grew big and strong, and teach it to obey him, but if he did not do so at once, the lion would soon grow

strong enough to spring upon him and destroy him. It will hardly be necessary to draw out in words the profound meaning of the little allegory. The child will understand.

Something has evidently dropped out from the eighth verse of this story, and it will be wise to supply it as the Jews do, by telling how after God had tried to make Cain resolve to be good, "Cain said to Abel his brother, 'Let us go into the field.'" We may believe that Abel was glad to go, thinking that Cain was ready to be friends again. Ah, no! While they talked together in the field, Cain killed his brother! That crouching baby lion had grown strong, and had got the best of him. This is where envy and jealousy and bad feeling end!

Now God spoke to Cain again, but in what a different way! He was not now trying to induce him to be good, but punishing him for his dreadful sin. And yet even a child of seven can be shown, especially if he already knows the story of the disobedience and punishment of Adam and Eve, that God was merciful to Cain even when he punished him, as a father always is when He punishes his child. God had sent Adam and Eve out of paradise that they might learn by hard work and sorrow to be good. Now He sent Cain away from his home and his family, where he would have to

work even harder. Cain did not want to go away from his family; he was afraid that some one would kill him, for his conscience told him that he deserved to be killed. And God, who was still the loving Father of this wicked man, gave him a sign by which he could know that his Father God was still watching over him and would not let any one kill him.[1] And so Cain went away, and built a city, and lived all the rest of his life away from his father and mother, and without the love of God in his heart.

When the children are older, and have studied ancient history, this story may be considerably amplified in accordance with what they have learned, or may understand by analogy with what they have learned. The ancient peoples always looked for some visible sign that their offerings were accepted by their gods. Almost anything in nature would do, — a rustling in the trees, birds lighting on the offering, or any such thing. Probably something of the sort was in the old folk tale which this writer was retelling in order to make the Israelites understand about God; but he left out all that, for it did not help to make God seem real to those who would read it, and this was what he wanted to do.

[1] The best rendering is not to the effect that God put a mark upon Cain to distinguish him, but that He gave to Cain a sign or mark by which to realize God's presence.

These children of twelve or thirteen, having been told the Bible stories as the Bible tells them, will not wonder where the people were who might kill Cain, for they have never been told that Adam and Eve and their two sons were the only people upon the earth. These chapters do not say so, the Bible nowhere says so, and evidently this writer did not think so. Certainly the later Hebrew people thought so, and until a short time ago nearly every one thought so. But scientific investigation has led many people to a different conclusion, or at least to admit a degree of uncertainty in the matter, and, whatever may be the fact, there is no reason why we should teach our children anything about the Bible which is not there and which they may one day have to unlearn.

It will be best, however, to wait until they are still older, and know more about the thoughts and ideas of ancient peoples, before going more largely into this fear of Cain; but when the time comes — at perhaps fourteen or fifteen — they will be much interested in learning that Cain's fear was due to the instinct for blood revenge, which is common to all peoples in early times. If a man killed another it was the duty of a relative of the dead man to kill his murderer and then of the murderer's relatives to kill the "avenger of

blood," and so the "blood feud" would last, sometimes, for generations. This almost universal human instinct survived in Scotland until quite recent times, as the young people know who read Scott's novels.[1] It survives to this day among the peasants of Italy and the mountaineers of Tennessee and Kentucky, as the young people who read the newspapers know, and it appears in its most debased form in the passion for lynching.

Now every universal custom has a justification in something, and there is no doubt that in the early age of the world the law of blood revenge served a good purpose, in preventing many murders among the widely scattered nomadic peoples who formed a certain early stage of civilization. The Arabs to this day dread to commit murder, because they believe that the ghost of the murdered man hovers over his grave in the form of a bird that cries, "Give me drink! give me drink!" and can be quieted only when the blood of the murderer has been shed. Cain felt all this. The story does not tell us that he had ever heard the command "Thou shalt not kill," but he felt that men would kill him for killing his brother. The voice of Abel's blood seemed to him to be crying from the earth in so loud a tone that some one would be sure to hear and avenge his death.

[1] "The Monastery."

The children who are discussing this story with their mother will be ready to perceive that at the time when it was written the practice of blood revenge had grown to be a terrible evil, and that this writer saw an opportunity to use this old folk tale about Cain and Abel to show that God does not approve of blood revenge.

When they were younger they saw nothing significant in Cain's reluctance to be sent away, on the ground that "from thy face I shall be hid." They instinctively felt that one who has done dreadful wrong cannot enjoy the light of God's face. But now that they are older they may be shown by Cain's objection and God's reply that the writer of this story was using it to correct another almost universal mistake. The Israelites of that early time believed that God was the God of Israel only, and that outside of Palestine He was not to be found. All the other peoples had the same idea of their gods, and though the people Israel thought that Jehovah was greater than all other gods, they could not understand how He could be God over the whole earth. So devout a man as David believed that if he were banished to the land of Moab, he would be obliged to serve another god. The prophets did not think so, nor the most devout men in Israel, but most of the people did ; and this story was meant to show that

God rules over the whole earth and over all men, since even in his far banishment He was looking after Cain, and able to punish any who might kill him.

As to the mark that was "given for" Cain, the Revised Version of this chapter shows that it was not, as used to be thought, some mark put upon him to deter others from killing him; it was a "sign" for Cain's own benefit, as the rainbow was a sign for Noah and his descendants after the flood. We do not know what the sign was; it may have been a star in the sky or any other natural thing which would remind him that he was not too far away from God to be protected by Him.

II

At this point in the children's development, fourteen or fifteen, they will be interested in learning that except among Bible-reading people, Cain's question, "Am I my brother's keeper?" is the universal question. A celebrated French pastor[1] once said that it might almost be taken for the device of humanity outside of the gospel. All primitive peoples feel justified in killing a stranger for no other reason than that he is a

[1] The late Eugène Bersier.

stranger. And as all the Bible stories are meant sooner or later to lead the growing mind to Christ, the story of Cain and Abel may be used as the basis of a comparison between the narrow ideas of brotherhood of even the most civilized peoples, of even the noblest Jews, before Christ, and the ideas which have been gained from the teachings of Jesus. A few extracts from such a book as Brace's "Gesta Christi" might be given them to read, that they may see the enormous difference between the Christian idea of brotherhood and that of people who do not form their ideas on the teachings of Jesus. And it will interest any bright boy or girl to learn that the first hospital was founded in Ephesus, where the beloved disciple had preached that God is love, and that the first orphanage was founded there not long after. Thus this story, which the children have known all their lives, may take its place at the very foundation of that study of social obligations which happily will be an integral part of the education of the rising generation.

The significance of this little story does not end even here. With the study of literature, this, like the preceding stories, should be related to the world's literature, by showing that like the other stories it has its place in the legends of many peoples. It is not so easy to

trace as some others, because this writer so carefully omitted every feature that would not bear a spiritual meaning; but they will find analogies to it in their studies or their encyclopædia researches. When psychology and ethics are added to their school curriculum the time has come for a review of the whole story from the point of view of the history of the ethical development of man. The story begins by showing mankind, shut out from paradise, beginning life anew in a new environment, consequent upon the failure of Adam and Eve in their first moral conflict. It shows them as accommodating themselves freely to the law of labor, each brother choosing the occupation he preferred, and still able to draw near to God with the offering of faith. It shows the evil results of sin, — that Adam and Eve having yielded to the tempter, an external tempter is no longer needed, temptation may come from within a man's own heart. It shows, too, what comes of separation from God, — such a separation from brother man, in heart, as to result in murder. Yet as the young people have already learned that good came out of the first failure, even the acquisition of moral character, so it might have come even out of the second most woful failure. Cain, driven to shift for himself, builds a city,[1] — an advance upon nomad life,

[1] Gen. iv. 16–24.

— and becomes the father of those who introduced civilized arts into the world, — Tubal-Cain the first artificer in bronze and iron, Jabal the first musician, Lamech the first poet. If Cain had but returned to obedience this advance would have blessed the world, instead of ending in corruption and the flood.

These concluding verses of the story are not historical facts any more than the others; like them, they are psychological facts, and the time is rapidly passing when the mother will make the mistake of giving to them any other than psychological significance. But it is possible, from this story, to unfold to the thoughtful young mind truths of greater than psychological importance. The narrative has the deepest spiritual significance. Cain and Abel were types, the first of the fit, the second of the unfit, to survive. Cain, adapting himself to his environment, became the father of an active, intelligent, civilized race. Abel, unfit for his environment, was cut off in his youth. The names their mother gave them at birth were typical: Cain was a man, Abel was but a breath. Yet where are the descendants of Cain? While Abel, being dead, yet speaketh. His life-work still goes on. His was a type of the sacrificial life, and the sacrificial life is the true life, — nay, since Christ made the ideal a

reality, it is the only life worth living. In Abel the sacrificial idea was but a spark; but to quote again words of the blind seer, that spark "became a candlestick with Abraham, a lamp with Moses, a fire with the prophets of Judah, until at last it burst into a conflagration on the summit of Calvary."[1] At this conflagration thousands of martyr men and women have lighted their candles, from the apostles James and Paul to Coleridge Patteson and the Chinese Christians. They have carried the torch of sacrifice into every country on God's earth; and every thoughtful youth must perceive that however dazzling may appear the millionaire's success, the scientist's reputation, the poet's renown, it pales before this flame of sacrifice which "has ultimately given its law to man as man." By it pilot and engineer die at their posts, that the burning ship may bring others to land and safety; by it Father Damien gives himself to the comforting of lepers, and dying, his work is taken up by women and by men who will not be denied the privilege; by it nurse and doctor brave pestilence, and the little child risks life to save another child from drowning. Nay, it has come to inspire even those whose highest ideal is wealth, and by it men take all risks for the sake of this low ideal. Let the chil-

[1] Matheson, "Representative Men of the Bible."

dren in Christian households be brought up with sacrifice as their life principle, and the new paradise will soon descend from heaven to earth, for all men will have been brought into harmony with the inner principle of God Himself, who so loved us that He sent His Son to die for us.

Cain, the archetype of sin, is the antithesis of Christ, as the Apostle John perceived,[1] and though an eminently successful man, who would desire to imitate him? Abel, the "righteous,"[2] was only a faint foreshadowing of Him whose blood crieth louder than that of Abel, and for better things[3] — not vengeance, but pardon. Who would not rather die Abel's death than live Cain's life?

One thing more this story shows, and shows it alike to little child and fallen man, — the infinite yearning of God over men, however guilty, and His longing for the companionship of the children He has made. The half-understood desire for God which impelled Cain and Abel to bring their offerings gave joy to the heart of God. It was because He longed for fuller companionship with Cain, that He tried by remonstrance and persuasion to bring him to a better mind. Oh, pathetic and dreadful thought, that God should try to bring His child to such a mind that He can commune with him in love, and try in vain!

[1] 1 John iii. 12–16. [2] Ib. 12. [3] Heb. xii. 24.

God loves to be longed for, He loves to be sought,
For He sought us Himself, with such longing and love;
He died for desire for us, marvellous thought!
And He yearns for us now to be with Him above.[1]

III

Genesis v. 21—24

In the fifth chapter of Genesis, in the midst of a dull record of names which to the little child have no meaning, but to which as a boy he may later return with interest, flashes out one of the most gemlike stories of the Old Testament. No child is so young as not to be impressed with the story of Enoch; the man who loved God so much, and who walked with Him, because, as some one has said,[2] he was going the same way. The story is very short, but it awakens long thoughts in the little child's mind. Let no mother tell her child that Enoch went to heaven without dying. He does not know what dying means, and the story says nothing about it. The entire force of the narrative is that the man who loves God and walks with Him has no concern at all with death. He *has* eternal life. His life is so full of God that "What seems death is transition." All there is to tell the little child is the lovely story of the

[1] F. W. Faber. [2] Dr. M. A. Dods.

man who pleased God so much that He took him home to live with Him in heaven.

The school children will learn before long that the minds of men in early days were full of this immortal hope of reaching eternal happiness without passing through death. In his Livy, the boy may read that Romulus, one of the twin founders of Rome, went to the land of the blest without dying — so did the Greek Ganymede and Hercules and the Assyrian Queen Semiramis and the Babylonian Xisuthrus. It is the natural human protest against death, the protest which our Lord answered when He said, "He that liveth and believeth in me shall never die." The mother can say all this to her children of twelve and fourteen, and they will be deeply impressed when she points out to them the essential difference between all these mythological fancies and the Bible story. For mythology deifies all these translated people; they become gods or demigods. Enoch, on the contrary, remained man all through, and was made the type of the perfect human being, the ideal of human goodness. He walked with God; he had no separate interests even *before his translation*, — the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews says, "he had this testimony, that he pleased God." His capacity for God fellowship was perfect; but it was human, and therefore the ideal for each one of us. Thus his life becomes a

revelation that every young person may appropriate as something possible for himself, — to meet God *now*, and walk with Him.

These children will be interested when their mother tells them that Enoch played an important part in Jewish legend. The Apocryphal books have much to say about him. He was believed to possess all wisdom, and one of these books is devoted to "The Secrets of Enoch." It was an instinctive recognition that "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom," the idea that superior piety must argue superior wisdom. They will also be quite able to recognize the difference between the legend of Enoch's translation and that of other ancient heroes. In none of them is any religious meaning attached to the escape from death; but the story of Enoch foreshadowed the teaching of our Lord, that "this is life eternal, to know God."

IV

Genesis vi. 5—29

No story is easier to tell the little children than that of Noah, and if it is made concrete by the possession of that very unæsthetic toy, the Noah's ark, so much the better. Two lessons from this story the youngest children will understand: that

wickedness must be punished, and God's loving care of man's need, the lovely symbolism of the rainbow, connecting heaven with earth. The older children will not be puzzled by the fact that the rainbow must have been seen by Noah and his sons many times before the flood, — of course it had, — but never before had they understood the suggestion of the rainbow. Now God appointed it for a sign, that the tie between earth and heaven had not been destroyed by the flood, or by the wickedness which had made the flood necessary.

The older children will have learned in ancient history and mythology that flood legends are found among nearly every people, — Greek, Assyrian, Persian, Indian, Scandinavian, probably those of Mexico and South America and even of South Africa, — and it may be well to show them that this fact does not argue that the flood actually covered the entire world. Rather, the memory of some awful catastrophe occurring in the early home of mankind was carried with them by the people in their wide migrations. As with most other legends, we find in Babylonia the one which most nearly resembles the story of the flood in Genesis. This fact makes it very profitable for the school children to read the Babylonian account and observe the differences, that they may again see how the inspired mind of the Genesis writer

turned to deep religious teaching a legend which was the common property of all men. The Babylonian legend, too, was worked over by a highly intelligent mind, as is shown in an inscribed brick excavated about thirty years ago in that region. This brick was a part of the library of the great conqueror Asurbanipal, who lived 668–626 B.C., and it is the literary treatment of the ancient legend.[1] The likenesses with the Genesis story are very striking: the god Ea commands Hasisadra to build an ark; there is a seven days' downpour of rain; birds are sent out, first a dove, then a swallow, then a raven, which feeds on the floating carcasses — even the rainbow and the covenant are in the Assyrian story. The deluge reaches unto heaven and terrifies even the gods. The terror of the earth people is vividly described and the awful sight of their corpses floating on the water. The account concludes with the departure from the ark, the altar, and the sacrifice: "the gods smelt the savor and gathered like flies over the sacrifice." In all this there is no religious sentiment, the deluge has no moral purpose, it was a mere caprice of the god Ea, who also by mere caprice selected Hasisadra to be saved. The revelation of Israel's God in the Genesis story

[1] A translation may be found in any library, with the librarian's help.

is all the more impressive by contrast. In fact, the story is not so much the history of Noah as the history of God Himself,[1] so marvellously does this story reveal Him in His relation to man.

The children at this age will not be in the least disturbed by having learned that Ararat is not the highest mountain in the region, nor by any calculation showing that an ark of the size described could not by any possibility have contained two of every species of animals. Nor will they ask how the writer knew the depth of the water. These questions trouble those expositors who insist on considering these chapters as literal history, but these children have not been so taught.

It will therefore be something that the mother will encourage, and not check, when the children, in their interest, study the chapters so closely as to discover a number of mutually inconsistent statements, as, for example, that two and that seven of each species of animals were taken into the ark, as also differing periods of time for the storm. It is not necessary for the mother to point out things of this kind, but when the children observe them let her be glad. Now is the time to show them that the inspired writer, who has all along been using old folk tales to teach

[1] Ewald.

the people about God, has here woven together two or more legends of the flood, since he could make a fuller narrative by doing so. It will be an interesting exercise for the children, on a rainy Sunday afternoon, to try to separate the two legends and discover their differences. Thus they will gain their first and absolutely safe introduction to that Biblical criticism which has so often unsettled the faith of those who have first met it in some less natural way.

There is so much in this story of value for the older children, capable of being interested in the religious and ethical development of mankind, that it is impossible here even to touch upon it all. In general, it must be observed that as the expulsion from paradise and the exile of Cain gave to mankind *a new chance*, a fresh start, so with the flood. Wickedness had by this time so prevailed that the earth needed to be washed from sin ; but God did not repeople it with a new race set above the possibility of wrong-doing — rather, the race of man was given a new opportunity. The moral necessity of the catastrophe is emphasized by God's long attempt — in the preaching of Noah for a hundred and fifty years — to win men back to goodness, to induce a voluntary change of heart.

The outstanding feature of the story is the

covenant, which henceforth runs through the history of Israel, and of the spiritual Israel. In this covenant Noah stands as representative not only of all men, but also of the animal creation; and it will be worth while to study, through the entire Bible, references not only to the covenant, but to the part which animals bear in God's thought for man.

The emphasis laid upon the sanctity of life is especially worthy of note. The sons of Noah might well have believed that God held life cheap after its wide-spread destruction. Observe, therefore, the insistence upon this command, and that its sanction is still the same as before the almost universal appalling wickedness, — that man is made in the image of God. The principle of the flood is not destruction but salvation, as was that of the sentence of death upon Adam. By the flood the danger of departing from God was emphasized for all generations.

Noah was the renewer of the world. Abel and Enoch had failed to make their environment better. Abel had lived for himself, Enoch had lived for God, but had been unable to impress the world by his life and had been lifted above the world. Noah was the first who tried to save the world. The building of the ark in the sight of all mankind has been called the first attempt

at reform, and so it was. The tragedy of Noah's life was not the flood but the wickedness; it made his loneliness almost like the loneliness of Christ. There is a beautifully suggestive picture which may well encourage reformers of to-day, in the moment when Noah walks forth from the ark upon the clean-washed earth, waiting silently under the rainbow of hope. Corruption has never conquered the world.[1]

It must be observed by the older children that we are never told of any wicked *deeds* of the men of Noah's time, but simply of their evil *imaginations*. "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." It is evident from the verses lying between the story of Cain and this story that Cain, the successful man, and not Abel the righteous man or Enoch the God-transformed man, was the ideal of that time. His name reappears in the names men gave their children: Tubal-cain, Cainan — he was their hero. Is there not something here for our time?

[1] The rainbow is far from suggesting to all peoples the religious ideas of the flood story in Genesis. The Greek Iris, the goddess of the rainbow, is the sister of the Harpies, and Iris herself makes use of the bow to descend to earth to inspire men with madness.

V

Genesis iv. 19—24

The intermediate passages just referred to include two incidents which do not appeal to little children, but which the older ones may hear about with profit. The story of Lamech, with his "Song of the Sword," which is properly given in poetic form in the Revised Version, reflects the delight of the ancient world in scientific discovery, a delight which is peculiarly that of the present age. Lamech glorifies in song his son's discovery of the uses to which bronze and iron may be put. Tubal-cain has made him a sword, with which, when necessary, he can avenge himself. But incidentally, while vaunting himself over Cain, he also glorifies him, adopting his standards, choosing evil rather than good.[1]

The passage which introduces the story of Noah, Genesis vi. 1, 2, has puzzled many commen-

[1] Lamech and his family are familiar characters in mythology. Apollo in his character of protector of flocks and herds corresponds to Jabal, as the inventor of the flute and lyre and the god of song he answers to Jubal. Tubal-cain is evidently Vulcan. Naameh, "the beautiful," corresponds to Venus. Yet in the Biblical story none of these is deified, though the writer's deep appreciation of the benefits they rendered to the human race is very evident.

tators, but it need not puzzle any child who has studied mythology. The story is evidently mythical, and it is very clearly allied to the grosser myths of paganism. It is impossible to know even superficially, as the children properly study them, the myths of Greece and Rome, not to say of India and Egypt, Assyria and Babylonia, and not see in this passage an exact, though most reticent, counterpart of their unspiritual and naturalistic explanation of that truth which is so incontrovertible and yet so mysterious, — the kinship of the human with the divine. Greece, with all her philosophy, India, with all her idealism, was able to explain it only by an actual union resulting in the birth of demigods and heroes, the giants (Rephaim) of this passage. The Bible alone of all ancient lore offers a reasonable, a thinkable explanation of the mystery. It is not found in this passage, but in the story of the creation of man in the divine image, inbreathed with the divine life. How it was possible, after that noble and satisfying explanation, for the author of Genesis to incorporate this ancient myth into his work, is to be explained here, as we have already explained some things in the story of Noah. Evidently the devout writer found this story current among the people for whom he wrote, and he as evidently found it valuable for his purpose to give,

by putting a religious meaning into a myth otherwise devoid of religious character, an explanation of that baffling mystery, the persistence, not only, of sin, notwithstanding the lessons of paradise and of Cain and Enoch, but also its apparent triumph. We must remember, and must show the children, that the Bible was given to a child people, who, like children to-day, were often best taught through the imagination. "I taught Ephraim to walk, taking him on my arms," as we support the faltering steps of a little child; and this bit of ancient folk-lore, in which must be some guess of truth, since it is found among every people, may have been a valuable part of that early training. It is not needed for the early training of our children, but thus reasonably explained to them when they come upon it in their reading, it may be made a help to wean them from that subjective and selfish attitude toward the Bible which is too common among Christians, as if every word of it had been written for their personal profit.

Incidentally it will be a matter of interest to the children to perceive that the idolatry of muscle, of athletic strength, so prevalent at the present day, was deemed by this ancient writer a snare to the men of old. There was no harm in giants, but when they became "men of renown"

just for their bigness and strength, then the harm began, and then it was that God saw that the wickedness of man was great.

VI

Genesis x. 8—11

Embedded in the genealogical account of the descendants of Noah are four verses which will strike any boy's imagination, simply by their suggestions, for they are not a story. They tell of Nimrod, the "mighty hunter before Jehovah." There are only one or two allusions to Nimrod in the Bible,[1] but the fact that his fame had become proverbial is indicated here, and ancient Assyrian legend is full of him. When the children come to study ancient geography they will find the name *Nimrod* frequently occurring in the names of places, Birs-Nimroud, Tel-Nimroud, etc.; and those of them who have begun to study the classics, or the history of literature, will be interested to know that Nimrod is the hero of the oldest epic ever written. It was probably written nearly two thousand years before Christ, to express the sorrow of the people of Erech (one of Nimrod's cities) when that city was conquered

[1] 1 Chron. i. 10; Mic. v. 6.

by a cruel foreign people; but like all epics it embodies older legends and myths, and the deified Nimrod is its hero. Nimrod occupies large space in ancient imagination as a hunter (as we have seen from the proverb in Genesis), and also as a conqueror, builder, and fortifier of cities. He used to be identified with the constellation Orion; and this is an interesting thing to tell the child when the stars are being studied. Those researches which are being carried on in ancient Babylonia have brought to light many legends about him, and he is found identified with all the cities named with him in Genesis, except, as yet, Accad.

VII

Genesis xi. 1–9

The last of our "morning stories" is that of Babel. Its peculiar freshness, and artlessness all its own, make it very attractive to the little child. It is the endeavor of the ancient people to account for the wide scattering of races, and for the very inconvenient fact that they speak different languages. This is *not* a world legend; it is not found among other peoples of that region of the world, not even at Birs-Nimroud (Borsippa), which is traditionally the site of Babel. This is

interesting, because only the Hebrew people so realized the unity of humanity in their relationship to God as to be puzzled by the facts which it attempted to explain.

There is, indeed, a Greek legend of the giants scaling the heights of Olympus, which offers a slight suggestion of the story, and Livingstone found among the people of Lake Ngami an explanation of the diversity of tongues somewhat similar to this. The Jewish rabbis did not, indeed, always attribute this story to the desire to explain this mystery. They taught that the motive of the people in building a tower which should reach up to heaven was to support the sky and keep it from toppling and spilling out another deluge; and such a naïve idea well accords with the impression which the tradition of the deluge must have made upon a primitive people.

The explanation of the name *Babel* (Confusion) given by this old writer shows that he did not understand Assyrian, for the true meaning of Bab-el is the gate of God. But his motive was not to teach etymology; he was simply indulging in that love of playing with words which is very characteristic of Hebrew writers. The explanation was simply a pun, or rather a figure of speech, a kind of play with words that children delight in, somewhat as if they were to say that Babel

means babble, and so confusion of tongues. The lightness of the old writer's spirit, shown all through this narrative, did not prevent the seriousness of his motive, which was purely religious: to show the evil of man exalting himself against his Maker, and seeking his own glory instead of the glory of God. When men rebel against God they become discordant among themselves, as here typified by the confusion of their speech.

VIII

I have failed indeed in my purpose if I have not by this time made it clear to every mother who has read thus far that there is absolutely no better way than by these stories of introducing the human mind to the great universal fundamental truths — truths of the character of God and His relation to the universe and to man, of the nature of sin and its deadly effect upon man's character and destiny. No system of pedagogy, no psychological insight, can devise a better way of presenting these great truths to the human intelligence than simply by telling these earliest Bible stories to a little child. I have tried to show that they may be so told to a very little child as to need no revision of the impression they have made in his later years; that the expanding mind of the boy or girl,

working upon the material which has been made familiar to it by much repetition, will be able, by applying its subsequent acquisitions to this very material, to attain to larger and ever larger apprehension of these truths.

The bent of mind which generations of teaching from another point of view have given to the mothers of this generation makes it hardly possible too earnestly to insist that the purpose of these Genesis stories is not historical but religious, or too often to remind them that their own purpose in telling Bible stories to their children has not been so much to teach them what once happened as to vitalize their natures with the large thoughts that these stories suggest. Hebrew tradition, as Ewald has said, possesses a vivid sense of truth and fidelity, of sobriety and modesty, and an aversion to everything immoderate, vain, and frivolous. In these respects it is a whole heaven apart from all other tradition; for example, the Biblical writer of the flood story omits all the dramatic horrors of the Babylonian narrative, — the terrors of the people, the corpses floating on the water, and the like.

It is a striking fact that Hebrew tradition did not make the earliest patriarchs semidivine, demigods, as other tradition invariably does; they are simply men, and it is because they are simply

men that these traditions are so valuable for us. The legends in these chapters are of varied origin, but they are marvellously adapted to the religious belief and the religious needs of the people for whom they were written. "The amalgamation of these legends, and their infilteration with the spirit of a higher religion, is one of the most brilliant achievements of the people Israel."[1]

Their adaptability to the religious needs of to-day is hardly less remarkable, for they reveal not only elemental but potential humanity, not only what man once did but what he may always do. When, for example, was the lesson of the forbidden fruit more imperatively needed than now, when social conventions more than imply that experience of evil is necessary for the enlargement of the soul? What Adam gained by eating the forbidden fruit was not culture, but separation from God, an evil conscience, "the pain of not being holy." Again, when did the world ever more urgently need to hold up before itself the unique ideal of immortality shown by Enoch, that immortality is not fame nor heroic deeds nor even continued existence, but being with God? What can we better do for our own children than to fill their souls with such ideals?

[1] Gunkel, "The Legends of Genesis."

CHAPTER V

A PATRIARCH STORY

Genesis xii.—xxiii.

I

With the story of Abraham we enter upon a new story class, and although these stories are quite as well adapted to the youngest children as any others in the Bible, it may help the mother if we begin to-day with the older children, and set them at work, some Sunday afternoon, upon a study of the book of Genesis as a book. At the head of the book stands the title "The First Book of Moses, called Genesis." If we could read Hebrew we should see that the title in the Hebrew Bible consists of only the last word, *Berêshîth*, "In-beginning," or, as Greek scholars translated it, Genesis. The Hebrews made this word the title simply because it is the first word of the book, as is their frequent custom.[1] But it is a very appropriate title, as the book tells about

[1] For example, the book called in the English Bible "The Lamentations of Jeremiah" is in the Hebrew called simply by its first word, "How."

the beginnings of things. The other title, "The First Book of Moses," is simply traditional. Neither in the book itself nor elsewhere in the Bible are we told that Moses wrote it. Without doubt, the tradition that he wrote it dates from very far back. The Hebrews believed it long before the time of Christ, but they never expressed this belief by putting it in their Bible. A part of this title is, indeed, justified; Genesis is very evidently the first of a series of which the general subject is the early history of Israel. We have already seen that to the Israelitish writer this history dates from the creation. "When God said, Let there be light, he had Abraham in view," says the Haggadic commentary of the Jewish rabbis. But as to the authorship, not only of this first book, but of the entire series, the Bible says not a word. Even our Lord, when referring to what Moses commanded, does not so much as imply that he wrote the books, any more than we imply that legislators write our law books when we quote their utterances.

When the mother is explaining these things to the boys and girls she can go on to tell them that the chapters and verses are an arrangement of comparatively recent date, and designed for convenience, precisely as the line numbers on the margin of their Homer or Virgil or Milton

are. None of the old manuscripts of the Bible have them. They were made by a Frenchman named Richard, about the fifteenth century. Nevertheless, the book of Genesis is not all one piece, nor did the Hebrew people so regard it. Its divisions are very clearly marked, and the boys and girls will be interested in discovering these for themselves. As they afford a clue to same essential characteristics of the book, this research will be quite worth while.

To begin with, the volume evidently consists of two books. The first of these books contains the first eleven chapters ; we have just completed that book in the Bible stories already told.

The second book begins where we begin to-day, with the call of Abraham, and it includes the stories of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph, — the patriarch stories. The difference between the two books is as clear as possible.

These books are divided into chapters, which, however, are not equivalent to the chapters in our Bible. Each chapter has a title, with the exception of the first in each book, which needs no title precisely because it is the first. Alert-minded children will easily discern where and what these titles are, and if two or three are working together, they will be immensely interested in a sort of competitive search for them, —

who will find them soonest or in greater number. It appears that each chapter, or section, is a genealogical story, or at least "the generations of" something; not always of a person, as the very first title — that of Section Two — shows, since it is "The Generations of the Heavens and of the Earth"; that is, it is the story of creation and of Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel. It begins at Chapter ii. 4, in our Bible. The next title occurs in the first verse of the fifth chapter, and shows that Section Three is "The Book of the Generations (that is, the descendants) of Adam." It contains the Enoch story, and the mythological story designed to show how evil became so prevalent as to require the washing of the earth by a flood. The fourth section, beginning at Chapter vi. 9, is "The Generations of Noah," and tells the story of the Flood; the fifth, at x. 1, is "The Generations of the Sons of Noah," and contains the stories of Nimrod and of Babel; the sixth, at xi. 10, is "The Generations of Shem," and includes no story; the seventh, a very short section, begins at xi. 27, "The Generations of Terah," and has only five verses. Its design is to introduce the story of the next book.

Thus we have in seven chapters a number of exquisite and profoundly significant folk tales, set in a framework of genealogy, designed to cover

the history of the world from the creation to the call of Abraham, "the great father of the Hebrews." The second book is of like character, in that it consists of a number of exquisite stories of the Hebrew people, set in a framework of genealogy. The first chapter, or section, of this book, the story of Abraham, like the first chapter in the first book, has no heading, simply because it is the first and needs none. We find Section Two at Chapter xxv. 12, "These are the Generations of Ishmael." Section Three begins at the nineteenth verse of this same chapter, "The Generations of Isaac"; Section Four, at xxxvi. 1, "The Generations of Esau"; and Section Five, at xxxvii. 2, "The Generations of Jacob." This section goes to the end of the book.

Thus the first book has seven sections and the two books together twelve. Both these numbers were, with the Hebrews, and with many other primitive peoples, regarded as "sacred" or mystical numbers, and it is useful to recognize this fact for two reasons. The first chiefly concerns the mother, clearly pointing as it does to the conclusion that the scheme of the book of Genesis is a mystical scheme, and that this must be taken into account, as we have done hitherto, in seeking for its meaning. No other book in the Bible has any such divisions, and evidently none other has

precisely such a purpose as this book, or should be interpreted in precisely the same way. The second reason is of practical interest for the children, whom we now imagine to be studying the scheme of the book of Genesis. They have come to that point in their school education when they are sent to a library to look up things, and thus have learned how to use books; and it will be intensely interesting to them, and a valuable exercise both religious and intellectual, to study the use and significance of mystical numbers in the Bible — three, seven, twelve, forty, a hundred, a thousand. No exercise will be more valuable as a means of divesting the child's mind of the notion, if he has unfortunately been permitted to acquire it, or to preserve him from acquiring it, that *truth* is synonymous with literalness; none will be more valuable for making him feel the important relation of imagination to truth. It is almost impossible for us grown people to attain to this freedom of mind, so fixed are we in the bondage of preconceived ideas, but if we begin right with the children they need never wear our mental fetters. There is no more deadly enemy to spiritual truth than prosaic literalness.

II

The stories of the first book of Genesis, as we may now call it, those which shine out like gems from their setting of dull genealogical record in the first eleven chapters, are true folk tales, redeemed from mythology not only by the truths about God, of which they have been made the vehicle, but also by their high spirituality and ethical significance. They show God "acting in the natural world and in the soul of man." As one turns the page between the eleventh chapter and those that follow, he becomes immediately conscious of having to do with another sort of literature. The stories of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph are not folk-lore, nor do they in the smallest degree suggest the mythology of any ancient people. We should not think of saying of them, as we have properly said of the preceding stories, that they are the product of inspiration working upon material which has sprung out of the wondering questioning of primitive minds as to the causes of natural and moral phenomena. There is an essential difference between the patriarch stories and the earlier narratives of the book of Genesis which is clear to every reader. Yet it may not be easy to say just what the dif-

ference is until we have established a relation between these patriarch stories and the literary culture of to-day. It is the mother's high privilege to guard her children from the fundamental error of most Bible reading of to-day, that of making it an exercise apart, unrelated to the knowledge which has been otherwise gained. The method of telling Bible stories which has already been described establishes that safeguard; and just as the mother has shown how the "morning stories" of Genesis are related to myth, so she will show that these patriarch stories belong in the literary class that we call legend. They are not history, any more than the earlier stories are. The children will instinctively feel the very real difference between the patriarch stories and the narratives of the book of Kings, for example, and an intelligent classification would certainly put them into an entirely different category. A profound student of the Old Testament[1] very suggestively compares the stories in the first part of Genesis with Hesiod, and those in the second part with Homer. They may with equal correctness be likened to the old sagas of Scandinavia, which tell the stories of the families that first settled in the country. Another distinction may be made between them. In the earlier stories

[1] Rev. J. P. Peters, Ph.D.

God is always represented as directly active, so that, as has already been said, they may almost be called the history of God rather than of men. In the second part of the book, although His presence is all-pervading, it is, so to speak, veiled. He speaks in dreams or He is not immediately recognized, and the true heroes of the stories are the men they tell about. But they are men of national importance, and this is characteristic of legend and especially of saga.

The important feature of legend is that, being the product not of any one mind but of the ideas of a whole people, it is expressive of the people's mind. Every ancient people had its legends of the founders of the nation, as every child knows who has studied ancient history. Those were usually kept current among the people by wandering story-tellers, or bards, such as existed in Scotland and Ireland until very recent times. Evidently there was such a class of story-tellers in Israel. The book of Numbers alludes to the Moshelîm, reciters of sarcastic verses ("they that speak in proverbs," Numbers xxi. 27), and they were evidently members of the story-telling profession.

There are many incidents in these patriarch stories, each one complete in itself, which may be told to the younger children; but as a whole the

best time for introducing a child to this group of stories is the period between eight and ten years of age, — the time when he begins to enjoy hero tales, — to which class these stories in part belong. If any parts of these stories are told earlier, — and such incidents as the visit of the three men to Abraham's tent, Jacob's dream, or the selling of Joseph into Egypt may properly be told to much younger children, — care should be taken not to read into them anything which they do not contain. They should be told as nearly as possible in the Bible words, trusting to the child's imagination to fill out the picture. The child's imagination may err, but it is far more likely to be true than our own. At any rate, whatever we may put in to fill out the framework, it must be nothing that will require paring down or explaining away when the time of proper appreciation arrives. Rather, let the stories be told as the earlier stories were told, with strong appeal to the child's constructive imagination to complete the picture and interpret the truths they embody and are meant to teach.

For these patriarch stories, widely as they differ in character from the early stories of Genesis, have this in common with them, that their main purpose is not to narrate facts but to make an impression. This is the purpose of every story-

teller, whether he be inspired or not inspired, and therefore, in all story-telling, questions of fact fall into the background and questions of method take precedence. The method of the writer[1] of these stories is conditioned by his purpose; each story has its own motive, and while in general the scope of these legendary stories is by no means as large as that of the earlier, mythical stories, and is motived not only by the truths implied, but also by the desire to embody in permanent form the floating legends about the founders of the Hebrew nation, yet the writer's general purpose, in selecting precisely these incidents from the enormous mass of story and legend which must have clustered round the names of the patriarchs, was none other than the purpose to impress upon Israel what has been called "the basic principle of both Old and New Testaments: the perfect God wishing to bring man to holiness and true communion with Himself." The accuracy of this description is striking; it should always be the underlying consciousness of the mother who tells these stories to her children.

Each of these stories has a special purpose of

[1] The question of the various narratives which go to make up the book of Genesis, J, E, JE, R, has no place here. *Some one* put the stories into their present form, and that is all that here concerns us.

its own, and it is this special purpose, apart from their high literary value, which makes them supremely important from the point of view, not only of religion, but also of the development of human thought, and therefore of the mind of the child.

III

Now it is a marvellous thing that the essential purpose of the story of Abraham is to reveal that deep truth which is just now especially occupying the thoughtful mind, — the great cosmic fact of unity. The one God, the one nation in whom all families of the earth were to be blessed, these were the prominent thoughts in the writer's mind. The peoples of the time in which he wrote were polytheistic ; they worshipped a multitude of gods, and the inveterate tendency of Israel to fall in their ways is abundantly shown in the books of Kings and of many of the prophets. The peoples among whom they lived, far from recognizing the unity of humanity, were perpetually at war with one another, making conquest indeed their business. All the energies of the writer's mind were devoted to showing that Israel's entire history must be interpreted by the fact that its founder, Abraham, worshipped the one God who was the

Maker of heaven and earth, the Father of men, the centre therefore of cosmic unity and of the essential unity of humanity, and that it was through the one nation which knew and worshipped this God that all the nations of the earth were to be blessed. In those days, when the possession of wealth, either in cattle or slaves, was a sufficient reason why those more powerful should make war upon the wealthy clan and rob it of its property, it was a strikingly significant illustration of the function of Israel in the world, that Abraham, with his large band of retainers and his great wealth, lived out a long life of peace in the midst of continually warring peoples, on that very soil of Canaan which from the dawn of history to the conquests of Napoleon has been the battle-field of the world.

The form in which the writer clothes these truths of unity, cosmic and human, is to the last degree idyllic, and though there is hardly a word of scenic description in the whole story, the all-pervading nature consciousness is as striking as in any idyl of Theocritus. The reader of these chapters seems always to be aware of hills and plains, of the starry expanse of heaven and the far-off ocean roar; and when the time comes to introduce the children to the geography of Palestine, they should be shown what long vistas between

hills, and what beauty of surrounding scenery, have a part in this story of Abraham. There is a description in the thirteenth chapter (verse 10), where Abraham and Lot survey the land, that Lot may choose his own portion, which, though the revisers have not put it into poetic form, is in fact a little poem, a nature song such as one finds in the canticles and Proverbs, or in the classic writers. The story contains an unparalleled number of manifestations of God, no fewer than nine in all, and in nearly every one there is a surprising sense of surrounding nature. Abraham is sitting in his tent door in the heat of the day, looking off upon the wide plains of Mamre; he is standing before the Lord on the hill east of Hebron, looking down the long vista between the hills to the far-off Jordan Valley and the cities of the plain; he is building an altar beneath the far-famed soothsayer's oak in the place of Sichem; God has led him to some commanding summit, that he may look northward and southward and eastward and westward, over the hills and valleys of the land he shall inherit, washed on its border by the illimitable sea; or he "brings him forth abroad," to look toward heaven and count the stars, by them to learn the innumerable multitude of his descendants. The eighteenth chapter, when the three angels come to Abraham's tent and he pre-

pares a meal for them, is pure pastoral, and precisely such a scene is often witnessed to this day by travellers among the nomadic tribes of the East. It is good and most elevating to bring home to the children this lovely nature feeling, just as it is good and most refining to train them to the enjoyment of fine scenery, and to the discernment of the varied beauties of nature, even where it offers no particularly grand or picturesque features.

There is much in Abraham's story which is likely to slip out of the narrative unless the mother prepares herself for telling it by some pretty thoughtful reading, filling out the outlines not only by imagination, but by knowledge gained from other sources. For example, even the departure of Abraham with his father and his nephew and his wife Sarah from the great capital, Ur of the Chaldees, will start the little child's imagination to work when he learns — as the enormous mass of legend teaches — that this was an influential family in that country; that they might have lived there as princes, if they had been willing to worship idols as the other people of the city did; and that they gave up all their property and their pleasant home to go away where they might be good and worship the true God. The long night journeyings under the starry sky, the

days being too hot for travelling, strike the idyllic keynote at once ; the building of altars and calling upon God at every halting-place strikes the religious note in such wise as will awaken response in even the youngest child, and the death of the old father in Haran, while yet they were far away from the promised land, will give the touch of personal sympathy. For the older children is the story of the sensation that must have been created, when, after long, prosperous years of sojourn in Haran, and the far journey with flocks and herds and bondservants ("the souls they had gotten in Haran"), the great caravan of travellers arrived in Canaan. The older children may be sent to histories and encyclopædias for information of the civilization of the Canaanites in that time, living in cities surrounded by comforts and constantly engaged in war, enriching themselves at the expense of their neighbors, yet entering into friendly relations with Abraham, letting him wander freely through the whole country, and never making raids upon his flocks and herds, although, especially after his return from Egypt with great added wealth, they must have offered a very real temptation.

The Egyptian episode[1] contains nothing which may not be told a little child, in the simple way

[1] Gen. xii. 10–xiii. 1.

in which it is told in the Bible; and it has a personal interest because it was in Egypt that Sarah found her maid Hagar, and brought her back with her to Canaan. The sheep and oxen and bondservants and asses with which the Pharaoh enriched Abraham will serve to make the older children realize the respect and honor which Abraham seemed able everywhere to command. For these older children, rather than the little ones, except in briefest outline, is the quarrel between the herdmen of Abraham and those of his nephew Lot, with its opportunities for developing the character of pastoral life; and the generosity of Abraham in giving Lot the choice of the land, with all the consequences which ensued, is an admirable story feature. Here should come a study of the physical geography of the country. I have already spoken of the almost indispensable value to the mother of Professor George Adam Smith's "Historical Geography of the Holy Land," as a help in preparing herself to tell the Bible stories, and also for enlarging the ideas and making concrete the interest of the older children. To this she should add, as an invaluable item of nursery furniture, a good relief map of the Bible lands, or at least of Palestine. Even the younger children will enjoy it, and to the older ones it will prove a great enlighten-

ment.[1] Children of ten and twelve will follow upon the relief map with unfailing delight the journeyings of Abraham and his family, the wanderings of Hagar and Ishmael, and will discern the wide panoramas extended before the view of Abraham from his lofty home in Hebron,[2] and the higher hilltops to which Jehovah led him. And during this process many of the deeper meanings of the story will unfold themselves.

The great war narrated in the fourteenth chapter, in which Lot was taken captive, and Abraham with his retainers by a forced march and a sudden assault released the captives, is a thrilling tale, even for the younger children, and still more so for those of the history-studying age. But for the older boys and girls who are going more seriously into the story of the ancient world, and are taking up the study of literature, this chapter is a mine of unexpected suggestion. The difference of its style from all that precedes and follows is very striking. It is evidently a passage from a very ancient, perhaps contemporary work, probably a history of Western Asia, taken from its context by our writer because it contains the name of Abraham. Scholars are by no means

[1] I may mention here, also, the excellent maps in a Bible Geography, lately published.

[2] More than three thousand feet above the sea level.

through with their attempts to define precisely the character of this document. Many of the names were evidently unknown to the writer who incorporated it in the Genesis story, and it appears evident that he made some attempt to modernize them in order to make them intelligible. Neither history nor legend, apart from this chapter, tells us anything about precisely such an alliance and such a rebellion as this chapter narrates, in which the capture of the non-combatant Lot was only an incident; but it is now certain that two of the peoples here probably named were at this period subject to Elam, and the names of these persons and places have been found on bricks unearthed in ancient Babylonia and brought to the British Museum. At least one of the persons here named, Chedorlaomer (more correctly, Kudur-Lagomer), called on these bricks "the father of Palestine," is well known to history. The fresh additions to our knowledge of that ancient time, continually being brought to light by archæological research, are making increasingly probable some such an occurrence as is here narrated. There are matters of detail here that can hardly be possible. How could even the most able company of three hundred and eighteen retainers unpractised in war, however well trained, and even with the aid of their gallant Amorite confederates, rescue from a

great victorious army not only the persons but the goods of a captured family? But the improbability of the details as here narrated does not in the least affect the interest, or indeed the truth, of the story. The art of writing history was only in its infancy; even the gifted father of history, Herodotus, tells many and many an incident that will not bear close investigation, and the arguments between historians of to-day about events as recent as our Civil War, the contest which has recently arisen over the question whether or not Joan of Arc was actually burned at the stake, show the futility of asking for absolute accuracy in a document almost four thousand years old. The presence of that document here is invaluable, not only because it has thus been preserved through so many millenniums, but as a striking evidence of the literary methods of the writer of Genesis. Moreover, it is very obvious, from the change in literary style, that in narrating the incident of the rescue of Lot, the writer abandons the document and falls back upon the legends which are in general his sources of knowledge. No doubt in the document there was the merest casual mention of Abraham, but the incident is one with which legend would be sure to busy itself. One of its most interesting features is the picture it gives of Abraham's relations with the

Amorite princes, and of his remarkably high-minded attitude with regard to the spoil. For countless generations spoil was considered as the legitimate property of the spoiler — were there not American officers who brought home "loot" from China, only a few years ago? How dignified, how highly ethical, how far in advance of his time, was Abraham in this transaction! And how eminently ethical was he in refraining from any attempt to drag his confederates up to his standard! The Amorites who went with him had not attained to his ethical heights. Moreover, the quarrel was not theirs, and they deserved to reap some fruits of their friendly alliance. That the conquered people must pay the expenses of war is an acknowledged principle of international ethics to-day.

The Melchizedek incident[1] comes in here. It is difficult to find the historical or the religious place among the Canaanites of this priest-king who served the "most high God." But the writer's motive for including this legend here is very evident, and very amazing. In the very midst of a story designed to show that Israel was God's chosen people, and chosen for the special purpose of being the unifying bond of humanity, he introduces an incident to show that Israel had

[1] Gen. xiv. 17–24.

not the exclusive privilege of knowing the true God; that all men had the same right; that God is no respecter of persons; and, as St. Peter learned with such difficulty two thousand years later, that in *every* nation he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted of him.[1]

IV

All this for the older children, the high school or college boys and girls. For children of every age is the lovely story of the visit of the three angels, one of whom proves to be Jehovah Himself, and the promise of the longed-for son; followed by that wonderful walk of Abraham with the Lord, when God made him His confidant, telling him what He was going to do. Here is the place for the relief map, and the children may trace that ravine between the hills by which, from the high hill-top, Abraham saw Sodom in the far valley, while he made his importunate prayer for its salvation.[2] The intercessory prayer and the destruction of Sodom will be lightly touched upon until the children are growing up; for though young children can know their right to pray for others, they can neither understand — cannot even think about — the nature of intercessory prayer

[1] Acts x. 34. [2] Gen. xviii. 23–33.

or the moral condition of a city in which not ten righteous men can be found; while the brave appeal of Abraham to the Judge of all the earth to "do right" is a subject for the most profoundly thinking mind. But at fifteen or sixteen they can understand that it was what Abraham had done for Sodom, the battle and the rescue (for we are not to think that Lot alone was either taken prisoner or rescued), which lent warmth to his interest and urgency to his prayer, and they can learn from it the religious truth that it is in fact only those for whom we are willing to suffer, for whom we have any right to pray.

Every child's heart will thrill with response to the joy over the birth of Isaac,[1] and will be deeply moved by the pathos of the banishment of Hagar and Ishmael.[2] As I have already indicated, there is something in the latter story for the older children. Only those who are well grown can enter into the full significance for the whole world of the birth of the son of promise.

No event in the life of Abraham so appeals to a little child as that which is commonly, and with deeper truth than appears on the surface, called the sacrifice of Isaac.[3] He can understand none of its far-reaching implications, but to its deeply religious spirit he will beautifully respond. The

[1] Gen. xxi. 1–8. [2] Ib. vss. 9–21. [3] Gen. xxii. 1–19.

greatest care should be exercised to give him no erroneous impression; but no mother will make the mistake of discussing with a child the ethical question — which in fact is not an ethical question, but purely historical and literary — which this story involves. The time for that comes later, and to it we shall later return.

The dignified and pathetic account of the death and burial of Sarah [1] has also its interest for the child who is old enough to know about death, and it contains much that may be later developed, as to the manners and customs of the time and the relations of Abraham with the Canaanitish neighbors among whom he had lived so long as a friend. Each of the incidents in Abraham's life is a story by itself, and may be told by itself, independently of any other.

Somewhat later than the period for studying mythology, though still while the children enjoy their Grimm and Hans Andersen, and when they have come to explore the inexhaustible riches of the "Arabian Nights," [2] comes the time for introducing

[1] Gen. xxiii.

[2] I have elsewhere emphasized the immense importance of the "Arabian Nights" to Western Bible students, for the point of view and the Eastern atmosphere they give. Lane's three illustrated volumes should be in every nursery. There are later renderings of the "Arabian Nights" (Lang's, for instance) perhaps more easy for the children to read, and charming as

them to the wealth of legendary lore which has clustered around the name of Abraham. The mother will find much of it in any good Biblical encyclopædia, and especially in the Jewish Encyclopædia, which is in every public library. These legends bear witness to the fact that the religious influence of the Hebrew people upon the world life that surrounded them was greater than is commonly recognized, and this should be carefully pointed out as the older children review the story. Tacitus and Strabo mention it, and the great number of "God-fearing" pagans in the New Testament story, the "proselytes of the gate," in Jewish parlance, bears incidental witness to this influence. Indeed, it was the immense number of these proselytes at the time of our Lord's advent, found in every walk of life from the imperial family to the common soldiery, which explains from the human point of view the phenomenal success of the apostolic preaching. This the historic and classical studies of the college boys and girls will show. But the younger school children have here to do simply

specimens of modern literature, but they are far from useful either as to text or illustrations for the purpose now in mind. Lane's illustrations and his notes are a liberal education in Eastern lore and an accurate representation of the Eastern spirit even of to-day.

with the legends that cluster around the name of Abraham, beginning with his life in Chaldæa. They tell that he was a teacher of improved agriculture, that he invented the alphabet, that the angels of God taught him Hebrew, not spoken in Chaldæa. They say that he was banished from Ur of the Chaldees for having strenuously preached against idolatry; — and indeed it is not amiss to find in a sentence of banishment God's summons to Terah to depart from Chaldæa and go to the promised land. Legend says that Abraham was at Babel, and remonstrated against the building of the tower, and that Nimrod, king of Babylon (as well as the authorities of Ur), persecuted him for his zeal in preaching and destroying idols, and that he miraculously escaped death. Another legend, embroidering upon the material after the manner of legend, says that he led a horde of insurrectionists out of Babylon into the desert. Arab literature represents him now as a great man of the East, a magus, well read in the stars, and again as a conquering prince sweeping all before him. Yet his title in the East was usually "The Friend"; with all his zeal for true religion he was never regarded as claiming authority, and as "The Friend" he is known to this day in local tradition, as we shall presently see. The Jewish book of Jubilees numbers ten trials

of his faith, that of Isaac's sacrifice being their culmination.

V

The next step of progress in the "graded system" of telling the story of Abraham's life is to take the relief map, already familiar to the children, and go carefully over his long journeyings, from Ur of the Chaldees to Egypt, or at least through the length and breadth of Palestine. The places should be identified where Abraham built his altars and took possession of the land for Jehovah, making it the Holy Land which it has been from that day to this. The fine geographical position of Shechem, in the high valley between Mounts Ebal and Gerizim, should be noticed. It is at the parting place of the waters from which the streams flow away on one side to the Jordan Valley, on the other to that great and wide sea which always made such a strong impression upon the Hebrew mind. The marvellous coloring of the Holy Land might here be mentioned, and if the mother has some of the colored photogravures of the country now so easily obtainable, they will help to make this geographical study more vivid, — the intense brilliancy of the flowers spreading everywhere like a Turkish carpet, the

vivid chocolate of the clay banks, the deep green of the grain fields and grass, the brilliant blue of the overarching sky, bending down on the western horizon to meet the deeper blue of the wide sea where go the ships.

Near by is the plain of Moreh, under the shade of whose venerable landmark, the "soothsayer's oak," Abraham built his first altar, and so impressed the warlike princes of Canaan that they made that alliance of friendship with him that lasted all the long years of his life. Thence the children may trace the way of the valleys by which Abraham and his retainers came to Bethel, and again built an altar. There, after his return from Egypt, Abraham pitched his tent and made his first permanent home in Canaan. It was from the top of the hill east of Bethel that Abraham and Lot viewed that far prospect of the "circle of the Jordan" which seemed to Lot so fair; and this is the time to identify the "vale of Siddim," where the four kings did battle with five.

From Bethel they may trace the ancient highway which led in Abraham's time, and leads still, southward to lofty Hebron, surrounded with fruitful valleys, where Abraham spent much of his life, and where, on the brow of the hill Beni-Nami, that rises above it to the eastward, he stood before the Lord and prayed for Sodom. Southward that

ancient road leads over great desert ridges to Beersheba, a vantage point for graziers and for travellers from that day to this. It was beside the wells of Beersheba that Abraham made a covenant with the desert chieftain Abimelech, king of Gerar, a Bedouin chief like those of to-day, and as likely as they to harass and plunder him, but for that gift of friendship which Abraham possessed in so rare a degree. Southward from Beersheba the "dry and parched land" of "the South," the Negeb, spreads out to the border of Egypt: the Negeb where Hagar wandered and where generations later David roamed with his brave outlaw band, and where to this day the Bedouin descendants of Ishmael are the dread of travellers.

It was in Hebron that Abraham mostly lived. Its very name to-day, El Khalil, "The Friend," perpetuates his memory, not only because he "was called the friend of God," but also, we may believe, for that marvellous power of friendship which through a long life kept him at peace with the Canaanites among whom he dwelt. It was in the plains of Mamre, near Hebron, now marked by the ruins of a great building of huge stones, that Abraham was dwelling when the three heavenly visitants claimed his hospitality.

One sight can be only traditionally identified, — the land of Moriah where, in the father's bleeding

heart, Isaac was as truly offered to God as if his blood had actually been shed upon the altar. Traditionally, it was the mount on which the temple was afterward built. The site was already occupied with a city, Salem, where dwelt the Canaanitish priest king, Melchizedek ; and it is conceivable that the words, *the place*, in the story, which have a very definite significance as of *the usual place*, indicate a shrine sacred in the usage of the people of the city. This, however, is hardly probable, and the more that explorers learn of the early history of Jerusalem, the more improbable it appears that this could have been the site. Another tradition points to Mount Gerizim, near Shechem, where Abraham built his first altar, and this seems more probable. The children may retrace the journey of the sad-hearted father and of the wondering son, who is making his first journey from home, along the old highway from Beersheba to Hebron, and thence to Bethel, and so up the height beyond where the streams part on their several ways to Jordan and the sea, to the summit of the hill that was afterward to be the mount of blessing.[1]

[1] Deut. xxvii. 12.

VI

The children must have come to thoughtful years before they can profitably consider, except most incidentally, the ethical feature of Abraham's story, and then the question of the sacrifice of Isaac will probably be the most insistent. I have already said that this problem is rather historical and literary than ethical. It will be necessary to take into consideration the religious ideas of the time, and the character of Abraham's religious experience. In Chaldæa he had certainly been familiar with the practice of the sacrifice of the first-born son. The religion of Canaan — notwithstanding the legendary presence of the priest king, Melchizedek — was much more debased than that of Chaldæa, yet apparently did not include this practice, or Isaac would surely have suspected his father's purpose from the absence of a lamb for the sacrifice. It is quite thinkable, if the admission be not imperative, that long years of lonely service of the invisible God may have confused Abraham's ideas, though without shaking his heroic faith. We do not ourselves admit that God could have tempted Abraham, though we have already seen that the ethical sense of this writer would not forbid him to think so. But

the instinct lying at the root of this legend is a true and a most religious instinct. Abraham recognized that Isaac belonged to God more than to his father. It is psychologically entirely possible that he felt an imperative need of proving to himself that he held this greatly longed-for son in subordination to the will and service of God. In Abraham's heart and purpose Isaac was as truly offered to God as though the hand had not been stayed that held the knife; and this is the profoundly moral and religious significance of the story. And we may observe that it tells *against*, not for, the practice of human sacrifice. We have only to point young people to the later history of Israel, when this strange temptation took possession of them simultaneously with an appalling lowering of their moral standards, to recognize the profound ethical protest of this story, and the abundant justification of its presence here.

There are other moral issues, simpler in character, in which Abraham undoubtedly failed. His treatment of Hagar can only be condoned by the customs of the time and the domestic complications arising from Sarah's not unnatural jealousy. His duplicity in Egypt is a grave fault from his own standpoint of faith in God. Yet again we must remember the necessary part of the moral ideas of the time in which the legend

was forming which makes the basis of this story. Evidently the writer sees no harm in Abraham's duplicity, and the fact simply shows that the enlightened conscience of 800 B.C. was far less enlightened than the Christian conscience of 1900 A.D. Could it be otherwise? The religious significance of the entire Abraham story is very profound. God was the regulating principle of his life, and this it was which made him great. In his deliberate choice of a wandering life, when he might have passed a life of ease and honor in Chaldæa, he was a type of Him who for our sakes became poor. We think of Abraham's life as a heroic life, but surely in his own day it was not accounted so. He had not even the distinction of being the sole man who knew the true God, for we have seen that this is the significance of the Melchizedek incident. His faith was almost inconceivable, even now, and it never shone brighter than when, in the face of apparent impossibility, he uttered the words of triumphant conviction, "My son, God will provide himself a lamb." His preëminence among men was due to the faith that made him the friend of God, and by it he was exalted and made strong in the conviction that it was his destiny to be made a blessing to all the families of the earth. His communion with God was well-nigh unparalleled. In his long

journeyings under the night sky of Chaldæa he had learned to talk with him as with a friend, and the many subsequent appearances of God to him are as psychologically explicable as the visions of Isaiah and Ezekiel, and of John in Patmos. They are not to be reckoned among the miracle stories of the Bible; they are in perfect harmony with the whole course of Abraham's life, which was one of almost uninterrupted communion with God.

The self-exile of Abraham from Chaldæa was the beginning of missions. He was a forerunner of Duff and Carey and Livingstone, yes, and of Franklin and Nansen and Peary, seeking to give the unknown world a share in their own blessings. To the life history of mankind it has even larger significance. It is analogous to the expulsion of Adam from Eden, of Cain from the parental home, and to the isolation of Noah by the flood; it was a new chance for mankind. Knowing God as Abraham did, he saw that there was a great future for man. He saw himself and his race not as singled out from other men for special favors, but as types of all mankind, and partakers in a special mission of blessing. His migration was the beginning of an ideal holy nation, of the kingdom of God.

CHAPTER VI

OTHER PATRIARCH STORIES

Genesis xxi. 1-8; xxii. 1-19; xxiv.; xxvi. 12-33

I

It is not necessary to consider in detail the graded method of telling the stories of Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph. These stories are told with wonderful simplicity, and as they stand in the Bible they unfold themselves to children of different ages. A few words may be said as to the significance of each. The purpose of the story of Isaac is other than that of Abraham. It must be evident, even to a superficial reader, — and children are not superficial readers, — that Isaac is not formed on as grandly heroic lines as Abraham, although he is certainly not the pale reflection of his father and his son that many writers affirm him to be. His part in the sacrifice story is always overshadowed by that of Abraham; yet surely Isaac's consent to be a sacrifice not only required no little heroism, but also an acute religious consciousness. And that he did consent is cer-

tain, since otherwise he could hardly have been laid upon the altar. His self-immolation was as perfect and as heroic as that of Iphigenia of which children who study mythology will be reminded, or of the ancient Phœnician story, of which the boys and girls in the literature classes may have heard. That the event was different in Isaac's case and in theirs does not affect the analogy. The story is highly typical. Isaac represents humanity, devoted to death yet not slain, redeemed by a power outside of himself. Greek and Phœnician myth clearly show that the universal conscience is awake to this condition of humanity. That it can find no outcome except the death of the victim marks the contrast between the common operations of the human mind and the Isaac story.

The outcome of Isaac's voluntary yielding of himself to death affected the character of all his subsequent life, and the key of his life story, as of the purpose of the writer, is found in the marginal reading of the verse which completes the narrative, —Jehovah-jireh, Jehovah will provide. The teaching of a perpetual guiding providence is the teaching of the life of Isaac, a new idea as it is here taught, showing providence to be not that special interposition of a divine being, of which epic poetry is so fond, but the sanctification of

daily life by the continued overshadowing of God's protecting care. Henceforth this idea of providence runs through all the Bible story.

The loves of the heroes are an integral part of the epics of the ancients, and in this respect, too, the Isaac narrative resembles them. The larger part of his story is devoted to that most exquisite of idyls, the courtship of Rebekah, well-nigh unparalleled in all literature. Oriental it is, indeed; the lover hardly appears at all; and by this fact it is so much the more true. It will be an enchanting exercise for the children who study geography to trace the path of the trusted slave Eliezer as he leads his caravan, laden with gifts for the unknown bride, from southern Beersheba, where Isaac mainly lived, over mountain ridge and fruitful plain, by lakeside and riverside and across the desert to far-off Haran, where Isaac's grandfather Terah had died. The close of the journey is an exquisite picture. The group of camels kneeling by the well, the man bent forward in the Eastern attitude of prayer, the girl coming over the rolling upland with her pitcher on her shoulder — it is the poetry of all the ages, yet true to daily life as we find it to-day in any Eastern village. And the idyllic beauty of the picture is penetrated through and through with that master thought, Jehovah-jireh, the constant providence

of God, guiding the very footsteps of the servant, and bringing to his side, with no effort of his own, his master's destined bride. How true it is to the epics of every people, with their constant interposition of the gods in the affairs of men; how sublimely lifted above them with its nobler apprehension of the meaning of divine guidance! What a lesson at once in literature and in religion for the older children!

These older children were introduced to the composite character of the book of Genesis in the story of the flood. A more advanced lesson offers itself in three episodes in the lives of Abraham and Isaac: the Egyptian episode of Chapter xii, that of Abraham and Abimelech at Gerar in Chapter xx, and that of Isaac and Abimelech in Chapter xxvi. I submit that no young person who has been taught to know the Bible as the children here contemplated have been taught, whose minds have been biassed by no preconceived notion of what the Bible *must* be or what inspiration must be, but who have learned by their own knowledge of the Bible stories that inspiration is what the Bible *is*, — no such young person, I insist, can read these three incidents without instinctively perceiving that they are varying legendary accounts of the same event. Granting that there may have been two Abime-

lechs, father and son, in friendly alliance with the Hebrew father and son, granting that no conjecture is incredible by which a distinction may be established between these stories: the inconceivable fact remains, that Abraham should have twice made the same inept and useless blunder, or that Isaac should by accident have stumbled upon the identical futility. The presence here of three varying accounts of the same event offers no difficulty to those who have the literary standpoint of these children. These are simply varying legends which have grown up from some one incident, piously preserved by the writer of the book, either because he mistakingly deemed them all narratives of fact, or because, according to his custom, he was not concerned about fact, but deemed their use to be peculiarly well adapted to meet some ethical need of the people for whom he wrote. He was not in the least concerned, and neither are our children, to discover whether the nucleus of the legend should be traced to Abraham or to Isaac. The critics alone are concerned with this question, and they properly, for it has large implications.

II

Genesis xxvii.–xxxv., xlvi. 1–7, 28–34; xlvii. 7–10, 27–xlviii. 22; xlix. 1, 22–l. 14

The story of Jacob belongs unmistakably in that class with which the children who are studying Latin or Greek or English literature have learned to know as epic. There are many epical features in the stories of Abraham and Isaac, but that of Jacob is all epic. It is, however, far more like the Greek epic than any other. Jacob has been called the Hebrew Ulysses because of his far wanderings, and the analogies are sufficiently close to reveal themselves to the boy or girl who looks for them, though in religious quality they are as far apart as heaven from earth. The story of Jacob embodies the truth of an overwatching Providence which emerged in that of Isaac, but it carries the idea a long step farther. From the time when Jacob leaves his father's house to pass through that experience of separation which, since Adam and Eve left Eden, has been shown to be necessary for the development of higher character, to the death-bed scene in Egypt where he blesses his twelve sons, every line reveals the marvellous truth of personal communion between man and God. Every incident speaks of God's personal

care of Jacob : the ladder set up beside his stony pillow, reaching from heaven to earth, the angelic band sent to guard him when he was to meet his brother Esau, the mysterious person who wrestled with him through the long night before that meeting. Even down to old age this protecting care overshadowed him, and when, after years of mourning, the son whom he had lost sent for him to share the ease and plenty of Egypt, God spake to him in the visions of the night, promising to go with him to that unknown land. The epical touch in this last promise may well be pointed out, "Joseph shall lay his hand upon thine eyes" — should close his father's eyes in death. Homer and Virgil often have this; the Greeks and Romans considering the closing of dead eyes as the last act of affection.

This new sense of the presence of God in daily life is the meaning of the whole story: of Jacob's intriguing with his mother to secure his father's blessing, his far wandering to the ancient seat of his father's house, his communing with heaven and angels in a dream under the overarching sky, his beautiful love story, his rapidly growing prosperity, his flight from Padan-Aram with his flocks and herds and children, his fears of his brother Esau, his conflict with God. Such conflicts are very frequent in epic story. The high school

children know that Homer's gods are continually fighting with men. But the contrast between those conflicts and that of Jacob needs not to be pointed out; it pervades the whole story. That mysterious struggle shows not so much Jacob's courage as his power of faith, but most emphatically of all God's willingness to bless. Jacob became God's warrior — Israel — not by wresting the blessing from God, but by at last submitting and being willing to receive it. It is in the very spirit of epic that Jacob is made a man of superhuman strength — able by himself to roll away the stone from the well mouth, without waiting for the assembled band of shepherds, as well as to endure the night-long wrestling with the angel.

The unloveliness of Jacob's character is usually emphasized; it has become rather the fashion to point to Esau's virtues, such as they were, by way of contrast. Let us not make this mistake with the children. Esau was sensual and selfish; his noble traits were mainly those of a noble animal. There is nothing grand in holding cheap a future good as compared with immediate gratification. Truly did the apostolic writer call him "profane," for to "despise" the birthright that carried with it the privilege of service is essential irreligion. Jacob was a man of ideals which he sought to realize by methods not ideally good, just as many

men of ideals do to-day. The unloveliness of Jacob's youthful character was largely redeemed by a controlling purpose which it is a mistake to call selfish. The desire for the birthright was a noble desire, for the birthright carried with it no added property nor preëminence, except in that highest honor, the opportunity for *service*. It involved the priesthood of the family, and that same function of blessing others which Abraham so coveted as to forsake home and father's house to gain it. The noblest feature in Jacob's character was his intense power of loving, leading him, as this Godlike gift always should, but does not always, to heroic and long-sustained self-restraint. This gift of loving is evident not only in the story of his courtship, but in many other incidents of his life, and is, indeed, in a large sense, its explanation.

Although the children have but lately followed upon the relief map the journey of Eliezer to Haran, that of Jacob over the same ground will still afford interest; while the return journey, which does not cover the same ground, has many points of interest. They will also wish to trace his later journey to Egypt, in the wagons which his son sent for him and his, and his silent return, travelling sumptuously now, with a long train of mourners, to be buried with his fathers in Mach-

pelah. The four hundred miles that lay between Beersheba and Haran must have stretched out interminably before the young Jacob as he set forth, not like Eliezer, travelling with camels and laden with gifts, but alone and on foot, his sole possession his father's blessing, that "blessing of Abraham" which meant so much to him. The night halt at Bethel affords opportunity for a little bit of topography. Though Bethel was a town, Jacob did not enter it, but sought for "the place" of the altar his forefather had erected, near the huge ladderlike rocks which, cutting off the horizon, may well have been the material suggestion of his dream. It is a reminder of the local ideas of God which, as has already been pointed out, for generations seemed to be instinctive, that after seeing in his dream the invisible bridge that connects God and man, the ladder down which angels came to him, Jacob should utter an exclamation of surprise at finding Jehovah there, whom he thought he had left behind at his father's house. It will be well to send the children to an encyclopædia to look up the custom of anointing a pillar in token of God's presence. The custom still prevails in some parts of the East, and such monumental stones as those at Stonehenge in England and Carnac in Brittany show that it was a world-wide custom, and responded to a real spir-

itual impulse — the same which makes us not only dedicate cathedrals but "christen" ships and formally set apart public buildings.

It was the first victory over a grasping nature, which he did not conquer for many a year, when Jacob promised to give a tenth of his property to God, not by way of bargaining with him, as has too often been said, but as a spontaneous expression of gratitude and also of faith. At that moment the future was very dark. Esau had threatened to kill him whenever he might return, and in such things Esau was a man of his word. But Jacob fully expected that God would be with him and that he would come again to his father's house in peace. And he was right.

III

Genesis xxxvii, xxxix-xlv, xlviii. 13-26; l. 15-26

The story of Joseph is beloved by children of every age. It ends well, and that is highly satisfactory. It makes especial appeal to persons of immature spiritual experience, because it vindicates the ways of God with men. On the surface, in its intensely human character and extreme naturalness, it seems more purely a child's story than any other, yet in its profound implications

it is almost more than any other adapted to the developing religious experience of the boy and girl in their teens. There are very dark shadows, but they only enhance the brightness of the picture. Through much tribulation Joseph wins his way to triumphant success, and it becomes evident that his vice-regal splendor is due to the discipline of the dry cistern and the dungeon cell.

Joseph comes very near to the children, he is such a human boy. A little bit of a prig, as other good boys are apt to be when once they have earned their reputation, a dreamer without any more judgment than other dreamers about keeping his dreams to himself, quite appreciating himself as such boys do, indulged and a little spoiled by his father, telling tales on his older brothers, and so exasperating them that they "could not say 'Peace'" — the usual salutation — when they met him. The children will not be surprised that his brothers did not care to have him with them. They don't like that sort of boy very much, although they recognize his goodness. They quite appreciate the feelings of the brothers when they saw him coming across the plain wearing his "coat such as princes wear," the sign that his father meant him to inherit the birthright and take his place at the

head of the family as the oldest son. The atrocious act which follows, however, quickly dispels their sympathy.

It is needless to point out how charming the very youngest children will find this story when briefly and somewhat dramatically told. To those of eight or nine it may be read straight through, like any other story, with a few brief omissions or paraphrases, and little or no explanation ; it will explain itself. For children next in age it has a literary value quite beyond any narrative that has preceded it, and a moral value much more closely adapted to their years. For it is an exquisite and very noble piece of literature, highly dramatic in its vivid presentation, and superb in diction, especially in the oratorical passages. The address of Judah should form an important part of the repertory of the boy who has come to the time of "speaking pieces" in school, and it will thrill him through and through with its noble eloquence. A year or two later, when the children are reading the "Arabian Nights," the analogies of those stories will be very helpful. They will be familiar then with the practice of putting inconvenient persons into a pit or dry cistern, and they will perfectly well understand its conformation, — narrow at the top and greatly widening beneath, to form the scene

of many episodes in Eastern story. They are also well acquainted with that august court official, the Grand Wezeer, and can quite picture Joseph's functions when placed "over the house" of the Pharaoh. They are also quite at home in such sudden reversals of fortune as Joseph's elevation from the prison cell to that exalted post.

Familiarity thus gained with the setting and atmosphere of the narrative, it will be easy a year or two later to review it in considerable detail, the relief map now taking its part in the story. It begins at Hebron, because Jacob had lately come from his home in Bethel (or perhaps in Shechem, for he lived at times in either place) to attend the death-bed of his father Isaac, and with Esau to bury him in the cave of Machpelah, which Abraham had bought for a family burying-ground when Sarah died. It was in the journey thither, near Ramah, that Joseph's beautiful mother Rachel died, leaving him with the baby brother Benjamin, whom he always so tenderly loved. Joseph's dreams show that his father was a farmer, as well as a shepherd and grazier, for one of them was of binding sheaves in a field.

The children will trace Joseph's long walk from "the vale of Hebron" to Shechem and to Dothan, where his brethren were feeding their flocks. And they may trace that ancient and

most historic of highways by which the Midianites came with their caravans on their way from Gilead to Egypt. For centuries armies had marched over that road, armies of Egypt and Assyria, of Hittite and Canaanite ; for centuries caravans had borne between these countries the myrrh and spicery of Gilead, and the linen and embroideries of Egypt, of which Ezekiel speaks. That ancient highway is still traversed to-day by tradesmen and travellers, as it winds along the green pastures of Gilead, crosses the fords of the Jordan below the Sea of Galilee, traverses the fruitful plain of Jezreel, and so over the foot-hills to the sea, where it follows its margin to Egypt. Let the children find the land of Goshen, too. It is no longer a puzzling task, since its locality was discovered twenty years ago, after having been unknown for centuries. It is a peculiarly fruitful country, and a railroad now crosses the fields where the sons of Jacob fed their flocks. Then let them trace "the river," which in telling this story the mother should always call the Nile, since it is so in the original, and to the children who study geography it makes the meaning more real.

The cold-blooded heartlessness of the brothers in sitting down to eat after casting Joseph into the pit is a part of the story which awakens the

sympathies of every child. Long years after, "the anguish of Joseph's soul when he besought us and we would not hear," returned to torment the brothers when they found themselves detained "in ward" in Egypt, on an accusation which they could not understand and which, in true oriental fashion, no one undertook to justify. The children will deem their distress no more than they deserved; they will understand that there was no revenge in Joseph's heart when he thus tested them. The whole story shows how it wrung his soul to "speak roughly unto them" and accuse them of being spies. Joseph knew by this time that God had a purpose in his affliction, although the sorrows of the past years must still have been very vivid in his memory. The psalmist no doubt preserved a true tradition, when centuries later he wrote, in a passage which should be pointed out to the young people who are studying literature: —

> He sent before them a man,
> Sold for a slave was Joseph,
> They afflicted with fetters his feet,
> The iron entered into his soul.
> (Ps. civ. 17, 18. The translation is Edersheim's.)

IV

When the children are studying ancient history there is almost no limit to the possible develop-

ment of the story. Who were the Hyksos kings, and why, though every shepherd, being dirty, bearded, and unshaven, "was an abomination" to the scrupulously clean and beardless Egyptians, the king was yet glad to welcome this clan of hardy Asiatics and settle them upon the frontier of his country; the high civilization of Egypt, suggested by the necessity for careful dress before entering the king's presence, the functions of the magicians and the wise men, whose ritual has lately been discovered; the brilliant learning of Heliopolis, into whose highest circle Joseph married — the Oxford, the Athens of Egypt, On, "City of the Sun," "Source of the Springs of the Sun"; the symbolism of Pharaoh's dream — the sacred river, the literal fountain of life to Egypt, and the cow, symbol of Isis; the illustrations which the monuments afford of many details mentioned in the story — storing grain, noting the contents of granaries, embalming, funerals, and mourning, — all these things, readily accessible in any library, will fill out the story to the imagination of the grammar school children.

At a still later period they may be set to find the explanation of some things that they have already observed, indicating the presence of two narratives in this story: the part of Reuben and the Midianites, and of Judah and the Ishmaelites

in the selling or stealing of Joseph. (Joseph himself tells Pharaoh that he was stolen, and Reuben evidently thinks so, though in making himself known to his brethren Joseph says he is "Joseph, whom ye sold into Egypt.") It will be interesting for them to trace the consistency of each narrative through the story, and it will afford a glimpse into the literary methods of the author of one of the most interesting and artistic tales in literature. That it is a tale and not a history is evident: how could ten corn sacks carry food for all Jacob's clan, especially when ten animals and as many men were fed from them during the journey? As a story this is perfectly right; these animals and sacks stand for the large caravan which, historically, must have gone to Egypt after food, but which would have encumbered the tale to the point not only of missing the dramatic effect, but of obscuring the religious meaning. This the young people who have been trained in the study of literature will readily perceive.

They will perceive, too, the profoundly religious character of the story. Joseph is the conspicuous illustration of brotherhood, as the other patriarchs of fatherhood. Not only his affection for the little motherless brother who was especially his own, but also his true spirit of brotherhood for all the others, pervades the whole story. In him, also,

the religious experiences of his father and grandfathers bore their legitimate fruit; temptation brought out in him a moral greatness and strength of piety unsurpassed if equalled by any of them. He was indeed an epitome of all their virtues, a singularly well-rounded character. The Pharaoh recognized that he was a man in whom dwelt the spirit of God. The tragic elements of his life never for an hour overpowered him, but simply gave him that quality which Matthew Arnold called distinction, and which may almost always be observed in persons of superior piety, however humble their station.

One moral fact, traceable from the beginning of the book of Genesis, shines out conspicuous in the story of Joseph, — the part that *separation* had to play in the development of these men of old. Adam, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Jacob, Joseph — all except Isaac were called to this discipline, and Jacob indeed twice, since his migration to Egypt was a separation from the land of promise. From the day of that migration, for generations the sons of Israel were separated from the promised land. As the German Delitzsch has finely said, the twelve sons of Jacob were the seed corn of Israel, transplanted in Egypt for fuller development. Joseph was "sent before" to prepare the ground for that trans-

planting, and in that separation he, too, developed his noblest traits.

The God consciousness of Joseph was wonderful, equalling and even surpassing that of his father Jacob. Though he had been thirteen years absent from the influence of home, when the summons came from the Pharaoh, he had not lost his sense of God's constant care. He had been willing to interpret the dreams of the butler and the baker, because he was still "true to the dreams of his youth," and still believed them to have been a message from God, though as yet so far from being fulfilled. And when Pharaoh referred to the evidence he had given of ability to interpret dreams, how quickly came his answer: "Ah, not I! *God* will answer the peace of Pharaoh." His unalterable confidence in God gave ground for his reassurance of his brothers: their wrong to him had been overruled by God for good. Thus he had been enabled to be the nursing father of that nation in whom all peoples of the world have been blessed.

The supreme significance of the story is this: that its happy outcome is due not to the fact that Joseph was spared the discipline of sorrow, like Enoch, or protected from it, like Noah, but that through its discipline sorrow itself was transformed into joy. Joseph was a man made perfect through suffering.

Dr. Matheson makes a beautiful comparison, which the children who are musical will appreciate, of the life of Joseph with one of Chopin's preludes. Each has three periods. The free and unrestrained melody of the first corresponds with Joseph's years of freedom. Then comes the second movement, tangled and rent like the middle period of Joseph's life. But at last "the melody comes into the open once more, the tangles vanish, the impediments are removed, and notes of the first part reappear in a new connection and with a fresh power."

CHAPTER VII

HERO TALES

I

THE general culture of the intelligent mother teaches her precisely where, in what literary order, to place the patriarch stories of the last two chapters. She is no more blinded to their character by the fact that they are not clothed in poetic form than she is blinded as to Walt Whitman's poetry or some of Matthew Arnold's, because it neither rhymes nor scans. The patriarch stories belong in the literary class called epic,— that is, the class which is distinguished from the drama by narrative form and from history by creative treatment. History discusses facts without treating them creatively, but the creative treatment of the patriarch stories is their outstanding character. They are based, as we have seen, upon legend, as epic always is, even such epic stories of our later writers as "Evangeline" and "Hiawatha." They appeal, as poetry does and history does not, to the emotions and the conscience, and they are so told as to make peculiar summons to the imagination, call-

ing up the scene as in a picture before the hearer or reader.

It may be wise, just here, to dwell for a moment upon the important religious function of poetry. Cheyne has reminded us, and every one's experience shows, that "good as the truth of history may be, the truth of poetry may for purposes of edification be even better." How many of us get our best preparation for prayer by reading hymns and other religious poetry? How many of us get our most vivid apprehensions of truth through the medium of poetry?

The patriarch stories, though told in prose, have the essential characteristics of precisely that kind of poetry which we call epic. Their writer, like other epic writers, does not explain the significance of what he writes. Nothing is more striking in the "Iliad" or the "Odyssey" than the *externality* of the story, the utter absence of introspection and meditation, and the same externality pervades all these patriarch stories, notwithstanding their profound spiritual significance. The significance is due to the unique religious genius of the writer, that is, in the highest sense of the word, to his divine inspiration. It is this which has enabled him to give to his epic stories a unique religious value.

And yet these stories are not different from

other epic in the mere fact that they are religious: they differ from others simply by the quality of their religion. For epic is nothing other than that form of history which, whether real or invented, lies at the basis of all religion. The study of the religious history of every people, in whatever age, always brings us back to epic, to the "Iliad," "Kalewala," "Niebelungen," "Zend-Avesta," "Vedas." The story of Prometheus, which some of the older children will study in the marvellous words of Æschylus, and of which they long ago learned the outline in their little mythology book, lies at the very basis of the Greek religion. And that Æschylus tells the story in dramatic form, and not in the poetic form of Homer's stories in the "Iliad," suggests that epic may also be clothed in prose, as in the Old Testament.

The Hebrew epic is like the epics of Greece and Scandinavia, India and Allemania, in lying at the foundation of religion: it differs from them in being *spiritual*, in pouring a spiritual meaning into the life of man with God; in its power to look forward as well as back, and foresee in the legends of the past the beginnings of an ideal holy nation, the kingdom of God.

A great Biblical scholar, Wellhausen, has said that "even when we do not understand these legends, they lose nothing of their charm, for

they breathe a sweet poetic fragrance, and in them heaven and earth are magically blended into one." But the mother may "understand these legends." She may even make her children understand them, if instead of regarding them from the historic point of view she considers them as epic, and studies them as she would study an oriental poem.

For it is always to be remembered that the Old Testament epic is oriental, and in that respect differs from the epics of any European people. Realizing this it will be easier to perceive the very important fact that the forms of speech which we find in it are not *Biblical*, but oriental. That is, they are not sacred forms of utterance, reserved for sacred books, but the everyday mode of expression in their own time and place. In fact, they are not even ancient, like the language in which some modern writers try to clothe their historical novels; they are the everyday mode of expression of the Shemitic folk at the present time. Any missionary to Western Asia or any Egyptian explorer will tell us so. Sir Samuel Baker, in his book on the "Tributaries of the Nile," shows that the Arabs of the Soudan use Old Testament language to-day. If there is a famine or a pestilence, they say that "the Lord has sent a grievous famine," or "a sore murrain upon the land." To the

Arab of to-day a dream is the voice of God as it was to Jacob and to St. Paul, and he still says and believes, "I have received commandment of the Lord in a dream" to do thus and so. All the figures of speech of those people to-day are Biblical, and if an Arab were to write a history of the present time, Baker says, it would not only be couched in Biblical language, but the modes of thought would be Biblical. A sojourn among these people shows most strikingly how *true* the Bible stories are.

Now there is no class of literature which so fires the mind of the developing child as epic does. An intelligent boy of eight will be thrilled through and through by passages from the "Iliad," or the "Niebelungen Lied," or Macaulay's "Lays of Ancient Rome," which, though modern, and falling far short of the ancient epics, are still epic poems. The experiences of the mother who has well told the patriarch stories shows that the child feels precisely the same sort of thrill when he hears about Abraham and Isaac, Jacob and Joseph, that those epic poems give him.

But these are by no means the only epic stories in the Old Testament. A large part of the book of Joshua is epic, and there is one book — that of Judges — which is just a splendid collection of epic or hero tales, as thrilling as Homer, set by

some pious writer in a framework of didactic history, corresponding with the framework of genealogy in which the Genesis stories are set. It will be a good Sunday afternoon exercise for the grammar and high school children, as interesting as any literary game, — and why should it not be treated as a game? — to divide the book of Judges into its original chapters, and discover the author's religious purpose in the didactic history which introduces most of these chapters. A similar "Sunday game" would be to distinguish the epic story from the other parts of the book of Joshua. It may be well at this point to explain to the children that a better translation of the word *Judges* is *Chiefs*. They will perfectly well recognize that these old epic heroes were *judges* in no sense of the word.

II

Judges xiii.—xvi.

An inquiry not long ago instituted among Sunday-school boys brought to light the fact that Daniel, David, and Samson were, of all the characters in the Bible, their favorite heroes. The Daniel story does not belong among hero tales, and the story of David falls more properly among the romantic tales of the next chapter. David as

well as Samson, however, had many characteristics of the Greek Herakles, and alert-minded school children will find it interesting to trace the likeness between them, and to discern the very great differences, — which are entirely religious and moral. Not that either Samson or David is to be taken as an example of morality. But right here, in telling the Samson story, the mother should explain to the children who have come to the age for explanation that the development of morality and of the conscience is a gradual process, going on in history. The older children will have learned enough of Greek history to perceive that a good conscience — which the Greeks valued as much as we do — was by no means the same in "Œdipus," for example, that it is in themselves. Saul, who was afterward Paul, verily thought that it was not only right but a duty to persecute the disciples of Jesus. Conscience is the voice of God; but as a baby does not at first even hear its mother's voice, and for a long time does not understand what it says, and learns its meaning only by degrees, so it is true that high and sensitive moral standards are the result of long inheritance and training.

Therefore though Samson cannot be in any respect a moral example to children of to-day, there is much religious significance in his story. How-

ever, it is true, and the children will perceive it from the beginning, that there is by no means the same spiritual significance in Judges that we find in Genesis. This is due to the author. The Judges writer did not work over the old legends as the Genesis writer did: he did not *saturate* them with religious meaning: he simply *surrounded* them with it, by his didactic framework. This is an interesting point for the children who are studying literature, and would make an excellent subject for an essay. The little children will delight in nearly every incident of the Samson story: the visit of the angel before his birth, his victory over the lion, his carrying away the heavy gates, his loss of strength when his hair was cut; his self-sacrificing death in the heathen temple. From first to last it is that story of victorious strength in which every child heart delights. In form the story preserves many characteristics of folk-lore almost unchanged. The wheedling by Delilah is precisely as in many an old fairy tale. The popular tales of many countries embody beliefs about hair that remind one of Samson. Missionaries to our Western Indians tell of the difficulty they meet in inducing parents to let them cut their children's tangled hair. They feel it a disgrace that a boy's hair should be cut before he becomes a man, and a woman with short hair

would feel ashamed indeed. The ancients believed that they might deposit their soul in their hair for safety; others with nearer analogy to the Samson story thought that their strength resided in their hair and would be lost if that were cut off. The somewhat general fallacy of mothers that children's strength "goes to the hair" when this is particularly luxuriant, may be a relic of some old legend. It may be observed that the meaning of Samson's name, "the sunny" suggests some of the numerous sun myths, and there are certain of these which suggest the Samson story. Nevertheless Samson is distinctly not a sun myth.

In absence of moral quality, Samson more nearly than any other Biblical hero resembles the heroes of pagan epic, and as we have seen he is in many respects especially like Herakles. The twelve labors of Herakles are nearly paralleled by the seven exploits of Samson, especially the slaying of the lion and the episode of the foxes and the firebrands, which has many resemblances to the killing of the Hydra. There was a later custom in Rome which was very like the fox incident. At the festival of Ceres a fox hunt was held in the circus in which burning torches were tied to the foxes' tails. The children may look up in the library the origin of this custom.

Notwithstanding these analogies there is a wide

difference between Samson and Herakles. With all his untutored spontaneity Samson is never uncouth or vulgar as Herakles often is. He is a brave spirit in the midst of much disappointment and trial, "a native merriness encircles him"; he is fond of riddles and puns and practical jokes. Yet all through his story the older children will feel the influence of his early training by "a mother who had talked with angels," and will recognize that that influence had its bearing on the tragedy of his life, which so solemnly foreshadows Him who just because He would save others could not save Himself.

III

Judges iv, v.

The story of Barak's victory is a splendid bit of epic, which will delight the younger children, and abundantly reward the study of those who are older. The relief map will show that as Samson's story is mainly laid on the smiling slopes of those western foothills which are very like the braes of Scotland, so Barak's adventures are mainly in the far north. The historic significance of the war with Sisera was great at that period, when, as the book of Judges shows, the

twelve tribes had as yet no national feeling, but each lived for itself, somewhat like our thirteen colonies after the Revolution and before the adoption of the Constitution. Evidently the prophetess Deborah, like our Washington, was penetrated with the ideal of a united people and a united Fatherland. Her splendid ode, worthy the study of the advanced student of literature, is generally believed to be the oldest extant specimen of Hebrew poetry; yet what noble lyrical and dramatic qualities it shows, — impetuous rapidity, vivid suggestions, picturesque brevity, completeness. There are passages in it from which Macaulay was not sorry to draw inspiration for his "Horatius"; there is a passage in which, even in English, we hear the clatter of the horses' hoofs, such as the schoolboy hears in his "quadrupedante," and which Burke, Napier, Heine, Scott, have not excelled. There is immense dramatic suggestion in the mother of Sisera looking from her window; but it suggests most to those who, as children, have learned from the "Arabian Nights" the important part that looking out of the lattice plays in the life of Eastern women. The mother may here direct the children's attention to the ballad of Sir Patrick Spens, and to Logan's poem, "The Braes of Yarrow," in this connection. The touch of

oriental life in the picture of the fugitive general coming to the tent of Jael is very graphic, and, notwithstanding the doubtful morality of the incident, less doubtful when one considers the moral standards of the time and place, there is no hero tale in the Old Testament that more vividly presents the truth that the people Israel felt — that their individual lives and their national life had their integral part in the plan of God.

IV

Exodus xvii. 8–13; Joshua i–xi, xxiii, xxiv.

Never in any literature was there a more splendid hero than Joshua. We see him first in the book of Exodus as a youthful warrior, fresh from Egyptian slavery, yet with spirit uncowed by slavery, fighting the battle of the Lord against Amelek. Joshua is the first soldier of Hebrew history, and it is a very significant fact that according to Hebrew tradition he was the typical bosom friend; his loyal "service" of Moses the first example of pure and dear friendship. His character stands out as clear as that of Hector or Achilles or Miles Standish; simple, straightforward, undaunted, "very courageous," "not afraid or dismayed," never checked by the apparently

impossible, not more baffled by the fears than by the sins of Israel, not a talker nor a dreamer, but a fighter. In all this we see the old epic hero. And yet there was this difference: in all his exploits he was ever led by the heavenly vision. The captain of the Lord's host had appeared to him with a drawn sword in his hand, and that glittering sword he followed, in the long, mysterious march about the walls of Jericho, up the steep valley to Ai and Michmash, across the narrow plateau to Bethhoron and the marvellous rout of the Philistines in the valley of Ajalon, over mountain and plain to Merom, and through long years of stout warfare till at last it rested beside the sanctuary at Shechem.

The story of Joshua affords a splendid opportunity for the children to become thoroughly well acquainted with the topography of Palestine, of which they have already learned much, and it will be their serious loss if, with the book of Joshua in hand and the relief map before them, the mother does not take this opportunity to give them that familiarity with the country, both comprehensive and detailed, which will serve to give concrete reality to all their Bible reading, and sooner or later to solve many historic problems which for want of such familiarity have been found puzzling. In all the epic tales of Israel the battle-fields are

accurately described — just as they are in Homer. The guide-book for the vale of Elah, for Michmash, Jezreel, Jeshimôn, that devastation of the south country, is to-day the stories of David and Goliath, of Jonathan and the Philistine host, of Gideon's victory, and Saul's pursuit of David. But most accurately of all is the country described in the book of Joshua: *not*, as we might perhaps have supposed, in those chapters which describe the partition of the land among the twelve tribes; these are extremely confused; but in those chapters which narrate the truly epic story of Joshua, the first ten chapters and the last two, with other bits among which the land records have been interwoven.

The epic character of the Joshua narrative is strikingly brought out in many of its incidents; that of the disaster at Ai is particularly so, showing all the more strikingly against the advanced — almost modern — teaching of the demoralizing effect of plunder and booty upon an army. The epic character shows again when, no more deterred by repulse than Agamemnon's forces before Troy, Joshua brought to bear his strategic ability, — an ambush, a mock defeat, an overwhelming victory; and the Eastern key to the Judean plateau was his.

The next incident, the visit of the wily Gibeon-

ites and the artless absence of suspicion with which Joshua fell a victim to their stratagem and made an alliance with them, believing them to be a distant people, is in the very spirit of the old epic, and forms a most artistic introduction to the thrilling situation that follows, when the five neighboring Amoritish chiefs, inspired with alarm by the conquest of Jericho and Ai, and the evident terror of Gibeon, made common cause against that town, perceiving that the first step must be to destroy the traitorous city. Gibeon at once made an urgent appeal to its ally, Joshua. The map will show that it was by a forced march that Joshua appeared on the morning after the urgent message came. The battle that follows is little less than Homeric. In the early morning the sleeping hosts of besiegers and besieged were awakened by a terrific shout of Joshua and his men. Up from their tents beside the spring they started, the five kings of Amor and their hosts, and fled, closely pursued up the steep ascent to Bethhoron the Upper that lies at the head of the pass. "All day long the noise of battle rolled" up and down the valley. Dead bodies of the Amorites line the narrow path over the ridge and are strewn along the steep descent to the lower Bethhoron. Up from the Western sea comes a black cloud moving rapidly. Thunder mutters, the

cloud is rent by lightning, then the storm bursts, and with hail and thunderbolt the Lord himself comes to the succor of his captain. And as the sun breaks through the black thunder cloud, and the watery moon appears a thin crescent over the southern hills, showing the piled-up dead and the scattered band of fugitives tearing down the lower pass, Joshua makes that impassioned appeal for a longer day that this epic writer found enshrined in the folk-lore of an earlier time: —

> Be thou still, O Sun, upon Gibeon,
> And thou, Moon, upon the valley of Ajalon!

More in the spirit of Scandinavian epic is the grim story of the slaughter of the five kings; but it is epic none the less. The strategic importance of the victories of Ai and Gibeon will be appreciated by the children who are "in" history, and who know their relief map. By it the Southern Canaanites were cut off from those in the north, and the great victory of Barak afterward made possible. "Divide and conquer" might have been Joshua's motto, and it was his policy, as well as Cæsar's.

In precise analogy with the long addresses of the epic heroes is the farewell address of Joshua. The scene is the very setting of a hero tale. It is the classic spot where Abraham erected his first

altar, the "parcel of ground" which Jacob bought of the sons of Amor and bequeathed to his beloved Joseph, and the burial-place of that beloved son. On either side uprose the mounts of blessing and cursing, Ebal and Gerizim. In their solemn presence Joshua rehearsed all that hero history which they had received from lip to lip for half a score of generations: how their fathers had dwelt on the other side of the flood (the Euphrates) and served other gods; how Abraham had broken with these idolatries and followed the One God, though the mysterious leading drew him to exile in a strange land; how his descendants had gone down to Egypt, had been rescued from Egyptian bondage, miraculously guided and protected through the long wilderness journey, and had conquered Palestine, all through the power of Jehovah, the One God of Abraham. Now they had come into the inheritance promised to Abraham's seed, kept in trust for them by God through these hundreds of years. It is all epic, but it is Hebrew epic, since its purpose and its result were to inspire the great audience to renew their oath of allegiance to the God of their fathers.

V

The limits of this chapter forbid a more detailed review of the splendid epic story of Israel. In the language of the writer to the Hebrews, "the time would fail me" to tell the story of Gideon and Othniel and Ehud, of Abimelech and Jephthah and Micah, and of that most epical episode, the Benjamite war. A mere word may be said as to the special interest of the story of Micah from the irrepressible humor which pervades it, more artless and spontaneous than in other Old Testament story. Its historic significance in unravelling the tangled web of Israel's history, immediately after the conquest, is far greater than has generally been perceived. And it is rich in suggestions of the customs and religious ideas of Israel in that early time — the taboo (the "curse" laid by Micah's mother upon the stolen silver), the methods of "inquiring of God," the priestly office, and many more. The same may be said of the stories of Gideon, Abimelech, Jephthah, and of the Benjamite war, in some of which, also, the humor approaches to that of the Micah story. In some of these the religious sentiment is less clear than in others; yet the impression which they cannot but make upon the youngest child is a

genuinely religious one, while to the older children, acquainted with the epics of other peoples, the contrast between the religious ideas of Israel and of other peoples must be very striking. All epics show an underlying consciousness of the relationship of man with the divine. The Greeks believed that men were sons of the gods; so did the Hindus and the Scandinavians. The Hebrews believed that man was the son of God, but the conception of the relationship was otherwise different than the difference in the conceptions of deity. It was the method of the sonship that made all the difference. To peoples at large, it was the method of human relationship; to Israel it was the method of the inbreathed soul. And in the case of Israel this relationship was conceived of not as an end in itself for the man or the nation: Israel was the chosen of God that he might be a blessing to the world. No other epic writer ever had such a thought.

VI

The children who know the "Arabian Nights" in Lane's translation will be very familiar with the habit of "dropping into poetry," indulged in by all their heroes from the Khaleef to the fisherman

and the donkey boy. The like habit prevails among the Persians, the Mongols, and nearly all Eastern peoples, and it is by no means a mere literary feature of the stories. Naturally, the early Israelites had the same custom, and the songs and snatches of poetry in the Old Testament are there in conformity to general custom. The children, accustomed to this literary method, will not be surprised to find Hannah and Miriam bursting into song in moments of intense feeling, and men less gifted than they expressing themselves in like manner. Nor will they be surprised to learn that echoes of other poems are found in the Song of Moses and the Magnificat of Mary, the mother of the Lord. This is the custom of Eastern peoples, whose memories are saturated with the poetic lore of their country, which forms the chief element in education and the staple of their intellectual food. They will not be surprised when scraps of poetry are mingled with ordinary description or conversation ; this is the manner of the East. If these scraps of quotation were always printed in poetic form, as a large number of them are not, even in the Revised Version (and none of them in the Authorized), this illustration of the mental processes of Israel would be still more evident. The historian of Joshua puts upon his lips a fragment of an ancient ode of victory when he conquers the

kings at Bethhoron.[1] Samuel remonstrates with his sons in a rhymed proverb, and the prophet Amos warns Israel with another. The Israelitish people triumph over Sihon and Og in some of those "sarcastic verses" which the Moshelîm taught them. War songs, travel odes, dirges — there are fragments of them all through the book, quotations from the book of the Wars of the Lord (that is, of Israel), from the book of the Valiant (Jasher), and from the book of Dirges in which Jeremiah's lament over Josiah was preserved. To recognize these passages as precisely what they are is to be safeguarded against false interpretations in many instances.

VII

The children will hardly have reached the age of twelve or fourteen years without more than once observing what has already been pointed out, that *numbers* are used in the Old Testament not so much for giving precise information, as in a symbolical way. When they make that division of Judges into its natural chapters which has already been suggested, they will perceive that nearly all the events occupied periods of forty or

[1] And there are commentators to this day who insist upon reading it as historical description.

twenty or eighty years. They had already observed the frequent recurrence of the number seven, and perhaps of the number three. It will be a pleasant literary exercise for them about this time or soon after to look into these numbers, and try to ascertain precisely what they signify.

With regard to the number forty, which is so general and apparently so definite a period, they will soon come to perceive that it stands not so much for precisely so many years as for (in round numbers) a generation, such as we usually consider thirty or thirty-three years to be. No such vital statistics were kept in those days as governments now find necessary. There was no way, except tradition, for the writers to discover the age of any one, or, until the historic period, when the recording of annals began, the date of any event. In general, they could gather that a king reigned or a chief protected the people for about the average lifetime of an adult, or was cut off before his time, or a certain condition outlasted the time of any one then living; but nothing more definite than that; and it saved discrepancies and exaggerations, to make the period a generation or half a generation, or two generations. Then nobody made a mistake in repeating the story to his children or neighbors, while yet they had no books to keep things in permanent

form. The use of the number forty gradually extended to other periods than years, and for the same reason. One of the flood accounts says that it rained for forty days, and that after the rain ceased Noah waited forty days before sending out the raven.

As for three and seven, they have been deemed "sacred numbers" among all primitive peoples. Seven and ten (which is seven plus three) appear constantly in Hindu myth and Egyptian legend. They appear in every country. We hear of the seven wonders of the world, seven sleepers, seven-leagued boots, the seven wise men of Greece, the seven champions of Christendom. There were "seven great saints" in the principal periods of Hindu history. In like manner seven appears very persistently in the antediluvian story, as well as later. There are seven generations of Cainites. Sevenfold vengeance was to be taken on the slayer of Cain, seventy times sevenfold on him who should harm his descendant Lamech. It is interesting to note that the other Lamech, the descendant of Seth, lived seven hundred and seventy-seven years. Enoch, the brightest star in the antediluvian galaxy, was the seventh from Adam. Seven appears constantly in the flood story, the creatures saved by sevens, seven days' respite before the flood, the ark resting on Ararat

in the seventh month, seven-day intervals between the sending out of the birds. We also learn that seventy souls went with Jacob to Egypt, although a count of the names makes it necessary to include Joseph and his family who were already there, and no mention is made of the many servants and retainers who must have gone with them. This again proves that numerical accuracy was not the thing aimed at. A little reflection on the instances mentioned shows that what was sought was the idea of sufficiency, completeness. Seven was "the perfect number," and any multiple of it expressed completeness in a superlative degree. That seventy souls went to Egypt signifies that the number was complete, not one left behind. So when Simon Peter asked the Lord how often he should forgive his brother, he thought that "until seven times" expressed the utmost that could possibly be demanded, and our Saviour's answer, "till seventy times seven," lifted the idea into the region of absolute perfection.[1]

Three was above all others the perfect number

[1] So when Elijah was discouraged by the crushing out of Jehovah worship by Ahab, God told him that there were still seven thousand Jehovah worshippers (1 Kings xix. 18), — a perfect number. Ahab's army after his repentance was seven thousand men, "even all the children of Israel" (Ib. xx. 15), — a representative and perfect number, sufficient for God's purposes.

Nearly every nation, however polytheistic, has a trinity of its chief gods, and the triangle and the trefoil, used in Christian churches to indicate the idea of trinity, are found in heathen temples all over the world. Three appears in folk-lore of all countries: three sisters, three wishes, three tests of every conceivable sort, three knights in armor. The three angels who came to Abraham are in the same category, though raised above it, as we have so often seen that Israelitish folk-lore is raised above that of other peoples. The number three appears in genealogies in a significant way.

Enoch, we have seen, was the seventh from Adam, and Noah was the tenth, the third after Enoch. Noah, the tenth from Adam, had three sons among whom the world was divided. Terah was the tenth from Noah, and he also had three sons of whom Abraham was one. Levi, the father of the priesthood of Israel, had also three sons among whose descendants the priestly functions were divided during the wilderness march, which, we remember, was of forty years. Manifestly these things were not accident, so far as the writers were concerned. They were features in a carefully devised plan. If all the genealogical lists had been preserved without error or mutilation, — a thing impossible, — it would

doubtless be found that this numerical system was carried out through the whole Old Testament story. And even now, with all the puzzles arising from the errors of recopying through thousands of years, the genealogical chapters of the various books afford an interesting and picturesque field of study for the older children. Of course the little ones have no concern in it.

The number ten appears to be particularly appropriate to genealogy. The Chaldæans had ten prehistoric kings who together reigned four hundred and thirty-two thousand years, their lives far outlasting those of the Biblical antediluvians. Arab, Chinese, Hindu, and German legends each tell of ten mythical ancestors. The Egyptians had three times ten early kings. The biblical account is allied to all these, but with one very striking difference: none of the other peoples had an Enoch.

That the number ten in the Old Testament chronology is important simply as forming the framework of the story is evident because in the first chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel the entire history, from Abraham to Christ, is divided into three periods of twice seven generations. A comparison with the Old Testament shows that a number of names have been dropped out in the interest of the scheme.

This gives a clue to the whole subject, and it corresponds with what we have discovered about the number forty. The question with all writers in the period when books were scarce, and few could afford to possess them or knew how to read them, was to aid the memory of the people, whose only means of giving or communicating knowledge was by word of mouth. The precise number of years or persons or days mattered little: a *fixed* number was important, that the story might not be tampered with — that in the case of lists no new name might be inserted without detection. This is also the reason for the frequent repetitions of folk-lore, and for the prevalence of the numbers three and seven. Every child can recall numberless instances of such repetition. They were both aids to memory and safeguards against change.

We shall presently find an illustration of this method in the Old Testament. Let the children become familiar with these facts in this connection. They will be so many lights to illumine problems which others have found puzzling.

CHAPTER VIII

ROMANCE STORIES

I

Dean Sanders of Yale Theological Seminary lately said that the Old Testament histories are of the John Fiske type rather than the McMaster type. Professor Fiske's purpose was always something far higher than the statement of facts, the ascertaining of the historic truth of the events which he narrates. That is Mr. McMaster's ideal, and he lives up to it. We can rely on his painstaking accuracy. We know that he has thoroughly sifted all the evidence, has been perspicacious as to the significance of the original documents, has tested, collated, summed up, the results of investigation, and has arrived as nearly as possible at the exact truth. Professor Fiske's idea in writing was quite different. It was always to enable his readers to see the significance of any event or period of our history, the contribution it made to the development of the great principles — for instance, of liberty — upon which our government is built. There is no one, I imagine, who

would rank Fiske's histories lower than McMaster's as to trustworthiness, though his ideal is so different. No one would dream of saying that McMaster gives him a more accurate view of the past of this country than Fiske. And as to its future, every reader, however little of a philosopher, must feel that Fiske is by far the truer prophet. In fact, Mr. McMaster has nothing to do with prophecy: he does not undertake to forecast the future, and one must read into his books all he is to get out of them for guidance in future conduct as a citizen. Whereas we may almost class Fiske's work as prophetic history, so clearly does it set before the reader the inevitable tendency and outcome of the past.

It is very clear that the Old Testament histories are far more of the Fiske than of the McMaster type. They are not half so much concerned to make their readers thoroughly well informed as to the historic events of a given period as to show the place of that period and its personages in the development of the great plan of God. All the so-called historic books are illustrations of this method, and particularly so the book of Judges, some of whose stories we have studied. That book affords an admirable illustration of the fact that there is more than one way of writing history. To discover that some of the historic books are

properly to be classed with epic, and some with prophecy, is no more to deny their trustworthiness than their inspiration. In fact, the Jews themselves do not class any of the Old Testament Scriptures with history. They rank the books of Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings with prophecy, although, properly enough, not in the same class with the great prophetic books.

It is extremely important to bear these facts in mind in telling Bible stories to children of various ages. Young children do not ask for literal accuracy; that is not a matter that enters their minds, though they may often ask if a story is true, for their little souls reach up for truth as a flower reaches up to the sunlight. But it is sadly possible for a mother so to teach her child that truth is the same as literal fact, that his faith in the Bible as the inspired message from God will be shaken by his own thoughtful reading of it as he grows older, even though he never hear a word of what is called modern criticism.

The Samuel stories are admirable illustrations of what we may call the Fiske method of writing history — the prophetic method. Though there is much epic material in the life of Samuel, the older children will feel, though they may not be able to explain, the difference between the Samuel and the Joshua stories, for example. Yet if these

stories are not properly speaking epic, neither are they biography, nor yet a history of Samuel's time, for they leave great periods in his life untouched, and neither biography nor history may do that. More than once the writer passes over twenty years or more without a word, though we may easily perceive that they were very important years in Samuel's and his country's history. The chapters about Samuel are just a succession of Bible stories, bound together by a controlling purpose into a wonderful historic sermon with a deep religious meaning.

This method of dealing with facts as lessons is not confined to the Old Testament; it is characteristic of all oriental works of history. Neither an Arabian nor a Chinese historian thinks of writing a logical history, bringing out all the facts in their order and connection. Any missionary learned in the classics of China will tell us that the purpose of Chinese history is simply to make certain impressions, to deal with the past as lessons; and so it is with other oriental historians. The writers of the Bible, who also were orientals, succeed with this method to a marvellous degree, and this is why interest in the Bible is so universal and so permanent. The persons and incidents of which it treats are in their way universal. The figures are the work of an artist rather than a

historian, and therefore they are revelation. A revelation from God, Dr. Matheson tells us, is not merely a statement of what man once did, but of what men may always do. "It is the special announcement of that which is not special, of the universal order of God's works and ways, to man."

Yet this revelation is made through the story of an individual because in fact that which is permanent in history is not the characteristics of a race, but the traits of an individual. The typical man is the man who best realizes *himself*.

II

In none of the Bible stories is this "fine sense of divine purposefulness," this realization by an individual that his life is a part of the plan of God, more perfectly shown than in those of which Samuel is the hero. Nor is there any story in the Bible more perfectly adapted to the very little child than some parts of Samuel's story. But as no one is so foolish as to undertake to teach a little child about the prophetic character of Bible history, or how it reveals a divine purpose, it is evident that not every incident of Samuel's story, nor his history as a whole, is particularly adapted to the very young child. In this it differs from those "morning stories," and those patriarch stories

which we have studied. It belongs in a different literary class. As we have seen, the stories in the first eleven chapters of Genesis are of the class which in other literatures is mythology, ancient folk tales in which the people of earlier times attempted to explain the mysteries of nature; and having been redeemed from that class in order to be made the vehicle of religious truth, they are precisely and marvellously adapted to the very little child. Every one of them can be so told as to open to a child precisely the truth they actually embody. The patriarch stories belong in the class called legend; more definitely, as we have seen, they are in the class of the old Icelandic or Scandinavian Sagas, designed to preserve all that could be gathered up of popular ideas as to the origin of the Israelitish nation. But the writer had a far larger purpose than animates our folk-lore societies, for example: he not only, like them, carefully collected all that he could find in the memories of the people (or in earlier writings), but he made these folk legends the concrete presentation of great abstract truths. The hero tales, being epic, are simply an advanced method of accomplishing the dual purpose. Epic, as we have seen, always lies at the basis of every religion. But in the epic stories of the Bible the religious implications became more personal, more

practical and definite than in those of the two earlier classes. All these Old Testament stories differ from other oriental literatures of their class, not by greater historic accuracy, which indeed may be theirs, and which is only a question of less or more, but by the spiritual truths of which they have been made a medium.

III

With Samuel we come to another class of stories. They have some epical features, but they are evidently not epics. They belong in a class which in the development of literature comes later than epic, much later than myth. They are like the old Middle Age romances and tales of chivalry, such as King Arthur and Roland, and those which are most splendidly told by the old Spanish romancers. The Old Testament romances differ from these tales of chivalry, precisely as the earlier stories differ from mythology and legend, by the spiritual truths of which they have been made the vehicle.

As these stories belong in a different class from the Bible stories which precede them, so they demand a different treatment from the others. The mother will at once perceive that the most obvious teachings of the stories of Samuel and

David and Elijah, the purpose for which they have been preserved, are not universal but national. Using the false divisions of the present day, they have to do not so much with religion as with politics. The Hebrews made no such division, nor shall we when we gain a true conception of both religion and politics.

Evidently these truths, however much we may simplify them, do not awaken in the mind of the little child the same response which the earlier stories do, although there are parts of them in which they will find interest and delight. And when we come to the story of Joash, which is true history, we find that though it is full of interest for the boy of ten or twelve, there is very little in it for the child of three or four. The fundamental difference between the mother's treatment of these stories and of the earlier ones lies in this: the entire outline of the latter can be told to the youngest child and adapted to his advancing processes of education. The romance stories, on the contrary, must be adapted to the various periods in the child's intellectual growth, not by development but by selection, telling him at first only such incidents as he can appreciate, and adding to the story as he grows older.

IV

1 Samuel i; ii. 11, 12, 18, 19; iii.

There can be no lovelier story for the little child than the first and third chapters of 1 Samuel with some verses of the second chapter. I should also include the fourth chapter, notwithstanding its tragic end, at least by the time he is four years old; for it is necessary to round out the story — necessary, that is, to justify it morally to the child. The prophecy to little Samuel of the punishment of Eli's sons is not alien to the heart of a child. On the contrary, he will highly approve of it, and the tragedy itself contains no grewsome details, but is on a high level of pathos and dignity.

At a very early age, six or seven, at latest, it will be possible to make much of the local customs which crop up all through the story. Especially is it good to make more of the yearly feast than we are in the habit of doing. The idyllic character of these joyous vintage festivals, which were so important in the life of all ancient peoples, makes strong appeal to the little child, and puts it in the right condition of sympathy for understanding Old Testament history. The mother whose mind is colored by what she learned in

childhood of the Mosaic laws and the customs described in the Pentateuch will need to be careful here to put nothing into the story that does not belong there. Let her observe that nothing is here said of sacrifice or atonement, or of any of that Old Testament ritual in which we have been taught by the Epistle to the Hebrews to find types of the Christian dispensation. This was simply a joyful feast, like our Thanksgiving, with precisely the religious character which Thanksgiving was designed to have. The sacrifice — there probably was one — was simply giving God a part, and the first part, of the joyful Thanksgiving feast; for no festival can be truly happy in which He has not a share. We do the same with our Thanksgiving festival when we send good things to the poorer neighbors whom we know, or boxes to be distributed among the poor in great cities whom we do not know, before gathering around our own table to enjoy our Thanksgiving dinner, which should be as truly a feast before the Lord as any in Old Testament story.

Every little child will be sympathetic with Hannah's longing for motherhood. Does not he know that his mother could not be happy without her little child? And what else could she do but pray God to give her one? The child will respond, too, both to the pang and the joy of

giving little Samuel to God, and no more beautiful opportunity will ever occur than this story of little Samuel, lent to the Lord as long as he should live, by the mother who had longed for him so and had received him from God in answer to her prayer, to instil into his mind the truth of the joy of God's service. So he will early learn to feel that the highest of all privileges is to serve God, and that the mother's truest happiness in her child is to have him spend his life in serving God.

The mother will not have told the story as she ought to have done unless the child feels lonely with little Samuel, whose mother has gone away and left him, and then grows glad again, because Eli is very kind to Samuel, as good and kind as grandpa, and Samuel is glad to serve God in His temple with kind old Eli. Eli's naughty sons must come in here, or else the words of God to Samuel will be without meaning. The contrast between serving God because you love Him, as old Eli and little Samuel did, and serving Him without love, only for the sake of what you can get, may early be made striking enough to justify to a little child the revelation to Samuel; its character, I mean, not the fact of it, which needs no justification to a child. The surroundings should be made real, for young children think in

pictures. The mother may well prepare herself for telling this story by some careful reading of the "Encyclopædia," or of a chapter in Stanley's "History of the Jewish Church," or some more modern book on the subject such as she will find in any public library. The mother who has learned in Sunday-school all about the tabernacle in the wilderness, has perhaps never observed that in this story we have nothing to do with a tabernacle. The word is not once used; it was not a tent but a temple in which little Samuel lived, a building with doors, which it was his duty to open every morning, beside which Eli had his seat by day. In this temple Eli and little Samuel slept at night, and into it Hannah might go to pray and to sing her song of thanksgiving. Of course this picture is not at all like that of the tabernacle described in Numbers. Into the tabernacle no woman or child might enter, and into the Holy of Holies, where the ark was, only the high priest might go, and he only once in a year. But the Revised Version shows (though the Authorized Version does not) that the Hebrew of this story expressly says that Samuel slept where the ark of God was. How there came to be such a change in customs would be an important question if these books in the Old Testament were books of history. But as they

are not, the question does not concern us, in connection with the children's Bible stories, and it will never disturb the children to whom the Bible stories have been properly told. If the older children, when they have acquired sufficient education, care to investigate the very interesting literary question involved, it will do them good. It will not in the least affect their religion.

This, however, is aside from our present business. Our reason for wanting to make the child see the picture is that he may the more vividly feel the marvellous truth of which it is the setting, — God in communion with a little child. For this is a truth of vital importance, a truth so wonderful that if we do not receive it "as little children" we cannot receive it at all; and he can best apprehend it to whom it comes in the earliest years of life — God speaking to a little boy and making him his co-worker! And this little boy was no miracle: this is what the mother is privileged and commissioned to teach her children. Samuel was just what every child should be, what every child may be, one in whose heart God will love to speak, and whose help God is glad to have.

The story usually ends with the announcement which God made to Samuel, but artistic consistency requires that it should justify this communication by the story of the battle with the

Philistines, the capture of the ark, the slaughter of Eli's sons, and the death of Eli himself. Every child delights in the story of battle; he is quick to approve the justice of the punishment of the bad young men; while the dramatic picture of the aged priest, sitting by the temple door in his blindness, tremblingly eager for tidings, struck to the heart by the loud wail of the villagers, crushed to death when the herald announces to him the defeat of Israel's army, the slaughter of his sons and the capture of the ark — the child will see it and hear it all, and will need no pointing of a moral to make him feel in his innermost heart how wrong-doing brings calamity to one's friends and one's nation. He will be ready now for the last words of the story, that the child who is ready to hear God speak grows up to be known as one to whom God always speaks.

V

1 Samuel iv.—xii.

All this is a lovely and inspiring story for the little child, and there is not much more in it for the growing boy. But in the story of Samuel's later life he will find immense interest and inspiration, for it is a tale of romantic heroism or of heroic romance. Here was a people whom God

intended to make a blessing to the whole world, given over to an enemy who had harassed and spoiled them for many years. The purpose of blessing had been forgotten by them, and God Himself well-nigh forgotten. And here was a boy to whom He had spoken, a boy dedicated from his birth to the service of God, and gladly spending his boyhood in serving Him in His temple — a little temple page, a choir child, a helper at the altar. Now, having grown a little older, when his beloved protector and master died, he suddenly perceived that he was called to a larger service than that of the temple; that it was for him to free Israel from her enemies and bring her back to the worship of God. How splendid the appeal to the ardent heart of the listening boy! How every incident in this romantic story will bring out more clearly the high type of patriotism which the story of Samuel holds up to the American boy! And when was the lesson more urgently needed? It is the lesson of patriotism that is also religion, the true service of God. And it is here taught in that most impressive of all forms to a growing child, the form of a romantic tale.

As Dr. Matheson sums up Samuel's life, "He was to live long, do much, suffer many things. He was to purify public worship, to root out

idolatry, to judge the tribes of Israel, to humble the pride of the Philistine, to be the maker and unmaker of kings." And he was able to do all this not because he was an extraordinary boy, but because he was a normal boy — what every boy may be, one to whom God speaks. The story tells the growing boy that a religious childhood is the secret of a life of usefulness, that a childhood spent in the mystical temple of God — the secret of his presence — prepares the man for the most *practical* life.

VI

1 Samuel xvi. 1.—13; xvii. 1; xxvi. 25

For the child of five or six there is one more story of Samuel's later life. It is a part of the story of David, a simple story, idyllic and full of meaning. It tells of the prophet Samuel's visit to Bethlehem, his passing in review the stalwart sons of Jesse, his sending for the youngest boy David from the mountain pastures where he keeps his sheep. And when the youth comes in, fresh and ruddy from the free air of the uplands, wondering why he is sent for, awed at sight of the venerable prophet, amazed at the pouring of the oil upon his head as a sign that God has chosen him to special service, the child's love for the shepherd boy be-

comes a part of his life. For the child of seven or eight is the story of the slaying of Goliath, the giant champion, with its deeply religious spirit, the zealous loyalty for God, whose armies the unbeliever has defied, the unquestioning trust in God which leads David to dare all upon his skill with his familiar weapon, the sling and stone. No doubt he has often amused himself with it, often engaged in contests of skill with his young companions, sometimes even saved himself and his flock with it, from the peril of wild beasts. The deep religions meaning of David's conquest over the giant will not pass out of the boy's mind as in later years he delights in the chivalric romance of David's later life.

The episode of the slaying of the giant, however, affords an opportunity for that method of more particular study to which the older boys and girls are accustomed. It may be used to introduce them, with more detail than the earlier stories allowed, to the topography of Palestine, the Fifth Gospel, as Dr. Thompson truly called it. Some day when the children have come to be nine and eleven years old, and know by heart the story of David and Goliath, let them bring their Bibles to the table on which the relief map has been laid, while the mother shows them precisely how it came to pass that this decision of

the quarrel by single combat, so common in days of chivalry, took place between the Philistines and the Israelites. Let her show them how the Philistines dwelt in the maritime plain, and the Israelites on the high tableland, with its overshadowing hills. Let them find the vale of Elah, up which the Philistine army swarmed with their archers and spearmen and their war chariots. Let them trace their progress till they reach the three-cornered plain of Shocoh, shut in on all sides by hills. Upon one of these hills the army of Israel was intrenched among the bushes; and the children will see that the Philistines must have taken up their position on the opposite hill with their war chariots on the little plain below. It will be easy for them, studying this ground, to understand why there was no battle. For from the heights above came down two brooks and flowed along the foot of each of the hills on which the two armies were intrenched, uniting at the western corner of Shocoh to flow away down the valley of Elah. Either army, therefore, before attacking the other, must ford a brook, cross the plain, exposed to the darts and arrows of the enemy, not to speak of the attack of the chariots; then cross another brook and climb a hill, while the enemy safe above could shower their missiles upon them from behind the trees without risk

to themselves.[1] This clearly explains the determination of the Philistines to bring the Israelites into the open plain; for Israel had no chariots, and the chariots of the Philistines could do nothing on the hills. And so day by day the giant champion strode across the plain, hurling defiance at them and their God, in the hope of goading them to such exasperation that they would rush down from their intrenchment to be mown down by the sharp scythes of the chariots. He never dreamed that his boastful challenge to single combat would be taken up.

But not far away, on the hills above, toward Bethlehem, there is a shepherd boy seated in the midst of his flock, under the silvery olive trees. Now he is singing to his rude guitar, and anon springing up to practise with the sling that is the protection of his flock from the lion and the bear. His father sends for him to carry a message and a gift to his older brothers in the army, and so over the fields and down the hillside he comes, and brave in his unquestioning faith in God, takes up the giant's challenge, and becomes the champion and the liberator of his people.

Such a lesson in topography will make the

[1] At the present day there is water in these brooks only after the winter rains and snows. The gradual disappearance of the forests has dried up most of the streams of Palestine.

whole Bible more real, and awaken in the children a zest and an intelligent appreciation which will give them a new idea of the joy of study. They are old enough now, or soon will be, for the rest of the story of David's life, and the mother who has taught them thus far by Bible stories will not find it necessary to slur over the fact which, if their minds are as alert as they should be, they will soon discover for themselves, that this story is another of those instances where the inspired author has made up his narrative from two old legends.

No story in all the Bible is so perfect a tale of romance as this. The turn that the victory over the giant gives to young David's fortunes is most romantic: the favor of the king, the love of the king's son Jonathan, and the beginning of a friendship that all history reveres as passing the love of women; the love of the king's daughter Michal, and David's marriage with her as the reward of deeds of prowess; the generalship of the king's army, the enthusiastic admiration of the populace, the secretly growing jealousy of the king leading to attempts at David's life, his repeated escapes and finally his abandonment of the court, and his last parting with his friend, — a scene almost unmatched for pathos and poetry. Then comes the wild outlaw life, David and his

band of hardy young followers roaming amidst the rifts and rocks of Jeshimôn, the Negeb deserts, as brave and gallant as Robin Hood and his archers in Sherwood forest, now protecting the rich farmers and drovers of the oases from the depredations of robber bands that haunted the desert, now nobly sparing the life of the king who is roaming these wilds seeking David's life.

VII

2 Samuel ii.—x; xxiii. 8—39; xv; xviii.

The story of the consolidation of David's kingdom after the death of Saul and Jonathan, his many wars and brilliant victories, his twice thirty worthies and their splendid deeds, reads more than ever like the old romances of chivalry. And what episode in ancient romance so deeply stirs the imagination, as the rebellion of Absalom, that best-beloved son of the aged king? What scene is more romantic than that when the royal warrior, who has many a time ridden forth to victory, passes out from the gate of Jerusalem with shrouded head and unsandalled feet, taking his sad way to "the Farm-House," where his faithful thirty and their followers meet him, and accompany him across the deep flowing Kidron and

over the Mount of Olives, to his sorrowful exile beyond Jordan? And what lament of all literature stirs the fountain of our tears like that with which he meets the news of victory: "O my son Absalom! my son, my son Absalom! Would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!"

The children have followed all these events upon the relief map. One incident in this life of adventure and success it has made particularly interesting. It is the story which so nearly resembles the romance of Robin Hood which they have read and reread with such delight, the story how the Robin Hood of Israel won his Maid Marian.[1] The scene of it is that rocky desert of the south where Hagar once wandered, and to which, after he had become King Saul's friend, and then had incurred the king's jealous suspicion, David took refuge with his gallant six hundred. The time is the spring sheep-shearing, always celebrated by a great feast. Tell the children how the flocks came streaming in from all directions led by their shepherds, picture the gathering together of stores of food, the festal preparations superintended by a young woman of good understanding and beautiful countenance, the farmer's wife Abigail. Show them now the

[1] 1 Sam. xxv. 1b–42.

company of youths of free and martial bearing coming up from the desert — they are David's companions bringing greetings from their chief, and the request that on this festal occasion the farmer will remember how they have protected his flocks and will send them, according to custom, a share of the good things. Read them Nabal's rough reply which proved him not only a churl but a fool, for he could ill afford to offend neighbors who were so useful and so dauntless. Picture the wrath of David on receiving the curt and insulting message; then show them the six hundred men advancing across the desert with their long, swinging stride. They reach one of the deep valley clefts that add to the difficulties of this region, and as they are going down the cliff path on one side they see a strange procession coming down on the other — a little company of men with pack asses, and behind them a woman who rides with an air of command. The children are not too young to appreciate the dignified, appropriate, and winning words which Abigail addressed to David when the two companies met, the loyalty of the wife, the fearlessness of the woman, who, though in danger, is mistress of the situation, able to remind the freebooting chieftain how unworthy of him it would be to avenge himself with his own hand. It will not be hard for them to appreciate

the discretion and tact of a woman entirely mistress of herself and perspicacious as to the character of him to whom her plea was addressed, in her promise that when at last better days should have dawned — David's soul bound in the bundle of life with Jehovah, and the souls of his enemies slung out by God as from the hollow of a sling, as he had once slung a stone on the battle-field of Shocoh, he would not then be sorry that he had not shed blood causeless. They will understand that such a plea from such a woman would win the heart of David, that he would give up his purpose of revenge and retire to the wilderness. And it will seem perfectly natural to them that when ten days later Nabal died and the beautiful Abigail was left unprotected on that frontier farm, exposed to marauding robber bands, David should send for her and she should consent to be his wife. It is just the kind of love story, all chivalry and no sentiment, which the growing children can enjoy, while the religious tone implied and explicit in Abigail's noble speech and David's self-control raises it to the high level of the best tales of chivalry.

Not always is the chief of a guerilla band, however valiant and chivalrous, competent to lead great armies and conduct warfare on a large scale. David had been a bold, brave, and ever successful guerilla leader in the days of his out-

lawry, but he had also the large grasp of situations and the genius for command which made of him a great general. And so the story of his life has its further interest for the older children who have learned to study history; and no study of any life, save the matchless life which is at once the model and the hope of man, is more worthy of the study of boys of fifteen and upward. Not that David was a perfect man. Let not the children be misled by the ancient meaning of a word, to suppose that because he was "a man after God's own heart," therefore he was in every respect well pleasing to God. The word *heart* here means *purpose*, as it still does when one answers to a request, "with all my heart." David was a man of strong character, wonderfully attractive, brave, generous, and lovable, a warrior and organizer "after God's own heart," to forward his purpose, to bring Israel to the position he had designed for her; and for this work David's marvellous faculty of leadership admirably fitted him. But he was a man of many and grave faults, bloodthirsty, cruel, unscrupulous to attain his ends, and often selfishly indifferent to consequences. Many of his trials he brought upon himself. His faults were largely the faults of his time and his position, and compared with other Eastern monarchs, compared with many heroes of Eastern chivalry, even

David stands on a high plane. It will do no boy harm, it ought to do him great good, to study David's character just as it is presented in the Bible, with all its faults and all its crimes.

David was a man of wondrous charm, able to inspire boundless affection. Saul loved him at first sight, and only fierce and not ill-founded jealousy overcame his love. Jonathan loved him as few friends love: to his warriors he was "the lamp of Israel," his three mighty men adored him, and were ready to pour out their lives for his sake as he poured out before God the water from the well of Bethlehem which one of them had risked his life to procure. More even than his bravery, his patriotism, his personal charm, it was his genuinely religious character that gave his people that impression of him which lived in the nation's memory. He never fought for glory nor for selfish ends; his were the wars of the Lord, his kingdom was exalted for Israel's sake. He always worked in harmony with the prophets; that God-consciousness which marks the Hebrew saints was his to a remarkable degree. He was magnanimous to his enemies, especially to Saul. What more thrilling episode do we find in romance than that wild night walk of David and his cousin Abishai across the wilderness of Ziph[1] to

[1] 1 Sam. xxvi.

prove to Saul, asleep in his tent, that though in David's power he was safe? Capable of deep and genuine repentance, he had that faith in God which kept him from despair after heinous sin. For all these reasons, a study of his life and character may be made as valuable as interesting to boys in their youth. Samuel and David, though so different in other respects, were alike in this; both were called to God's service in early youth, and both owed the usefulness of their later life to the simplicity and fidelity with which they obeyed the call.

VIII

1 Kings xvii.—xix.; 2 Kings i.—ii. 15

Elijah was a man of another sort, yet much of the wild romance of chivalry clings to him. His story contains much for the little children; it is a true folk tale, not only in feeling, but in form. The mother who reads the story of Elijah with open mind, with the memories of childhood incarnated in her children, will see that the inspired writer of this story, with true genius, incorporated into his narrative almost without change a genuine folk tale, which had been handed down by word of mouth for several generations. The perspicacity, the inspiration, of this late author, who wrote,

it will be observed, during the captivity, which event the book of Kings narrates, is nowhere more strikingly shown than in his choosing the materials for the greater part of the Elijah story, not from the annals of the kingdom, to which he so often refers in other parts of his book, but from the lips of the people. For it will be remembered that from first to last Elijah was in opposition, the "enemy," as King Ahab said, of the established order, which was idolatrous and iniquitous. Without a shadow of doubt his story was garbled in the royal annals, after the custom of Eastern annalists. The writer of the book of Kings recognized this, and went for his material to the homes of the people, perfectly sure that however much the story might have been idealized in passing down from lip to lip through two hundred years, it had still by that very process been kept essentially true. The chapter that tells the story of Elijah's translation has the very form of the oldest folk-lore with its repetitions. Three times Elijah tells Elisha, "Tarry here, I pray thee, for Jehovah hath sent me to Bethel — to Jericho — to Jordan." Three times Elisha answers, "As Jehovah liveth and as thy soul liveth I will not leave thee." Twice the sons of the prophets say to Elisha, "Knowest thou that Jehovah will take away thy master from thy head to-day?" And twice

he answers, "Yea, I also know it, hold ye your peace." A story couched in this form is especially delightful to the little child, and there is a very cogent reason why this chapter, and the story of Elijah's raising the widow's son, and other wonder stories of his life, should be told to the children while they are young. I have already alluded to it, the importance of making children familiar with miracle stories before they go to school, and study those truths of science which seem to say that miracles are impossible, only because the real purport and significance of miracles is not recognized by text-book or teacher.

For the older children this true romance tale is full of historic and religious as well as of literary interest. Elijah was a heroic servant of God, of the rugged, stern, enthusiastic type of the Scottish Covenanters and the French Camisards. He was impassioned with the thought of the glory of God; he knew no hindrance in his effort to establish the reign of Jehovah. He had the moral ups and downs of the enthusiast, dauntless courage alternated with fits of deep depression; but in his deepest discouragement, when even faith failed him, the same consuming ardor burned within him. Like Him to whom he appeared on the Mount of Transfiguration, the zeal of the Lord's house was devouring him. He knew the secret

of communion with God as few knew it before Christ. "Cold mountains and the midnight air" knew "the fervor of his prayer," as they knew that of the Saviour of men.

Elijah was a man of the open air, and this is one of the best of stories to give children the nature consciousness of the Bible. This "prophet of the uncultured steppe" was in strange contrast with the luxury of Ahab's court, where he was so well known. He came from the wild deserts of the east, — not the rocky desolation of the Negeb with which the children are well acquainted, — and his whole story reveals his strong love for mountains: Horeb, and that Carmel where by preference he lived, with its bold headland jutting out into the limitless sea, and its wide sweep of splendid inland prospect — the river Kishon where Sisera's host perished, the "circle of Galilee" with its blue lake, Tabor and far-distant, snow-capped Hermon, and nearer the great plain of Esdraelon, with Mount Megiddo where King Josiah was slain, that battle-field of the nations which the seer of the Apocalypse saw as Armageddon, Har-Megiddo, the last battle-field of the world. The relief map will do good service in the growing children's study of this story.

For the older boys and girls is the study of that heroic struggle against Baal worship which was

the ruling passion of Elijah's life, and his profound discovery of the nature of communion with God. More clearly than any who had preceded him he perceived the moral nature of God, and it was this perception of the necessity of righteousness and justice as the condition of the divine blessing, which made him such a power in the nation. His relations with the court, his contest with the priests of Baal, the various exiles by which alone his life was saved, his long, lonely flight to the desert of Horeb where hundreds of years before God had walked among his people in cloud and fire, his tremendous experiences upon the rock where dauntlessly he braved tempest and whirlwind and fire in the daring desire to behold God, the revelation that came to him in the still small voice; his share, through the medium of his disciple, Elisha, in overturning the reigning dynasty, gone rotten with effeminacy and Baal worship and the dominance of an unscrupulous woman, and raising up a new dynasty with a reformer zealous for Jehovah at its head; his part in policies beyond the kingdom, in Syria where the general Hazael was intriguing against his king; and finally the fiery blaze of his intense life which no opposition could extinguish, not quenched but embraced in the glow of the fiery chariot — what romantic story of all literature

can surpass this? I am sorry for the young people, and sorry for the mother, who cannot find material for many a thrilling Sunday afternoon in studying together, in all the illumination of their literary and historic knowledge, the story of this great reformer of Israel.

IX

2 Kings xi. 1–16

With the story of the little king Joash we leave the realm of romance and enter upon sober history. It is an admirable introduction, for it is as dramatic and as stimulating to the imagination as a play of Shakespeare. The little children will love the story of the baby king, hidden by his big sister in the very temple, while his wicked grandmother was killing all the other princes that she might be queen herself; and how he lived hidden with his nurse in the temple until he was seven years old, and how at the end of that time his sister's husband, the high priest, dethroned his grandmother and made him king. The growing children will find much to add to this story and much to fill its outline, and will make the delightful discovery that the relief map solves some difficulties in the early part of the narrative. The

grown children will be interested in studying, not only the dramatic possibilities of which the great French poet Racine made such splendid use in his noble tragedy, "Athalie," but also the interesting political history which involved the kingdom of Judah with the drastic reforms of Jehu in Israel. The religious element is not so clear in this, or in any of the historic stories, as in the romance tales which precede them; yet the teaching of an overruling providence, and the sense of the high place of the kingdom of Judah, in the plan of God, are strikingly clear in this history of the reign of Joash.

CHAPTER IX

PURPOSE STORIES

I

MATTHEW ARNOLD says that the literature of every people grows from folk-lore to philosophy, from the imaginative and concrete to the scientific and abstract. The mother who has been telling her children Bible stories after the graded system suggested and partly outlined in these chapters needs not to be told, for experience with her children has taught her, that although it is quite conceivable that God could have given to the world a Bible, a volume of inspired Scriptures, of an entirely different character, not following the analogy of other literatures, standing from the first upon the plane of the scientific and the abstract as to historic accuracy and theological truth, it would have been useless, for no primitive or half-cultured people could have understood it, any more than could the children of to-day.

Thus far we have studied the story lore of the Old Testament in its sequence as it stands in the Bible, and have found its development accurately

corresponding with the historic development of literature everywhere. Its earliest stories are based upon myth, its patriarch stories upon legend. Later the legendary stories take the more elaborate character of epic, and they are followed by romance shading off into history. The next step in the order of literary as of intellectual development is philosophy, and the analogy thus far followed would lead us to look for philosophical literature in the Old Testament. In fact, it contains much, not only in what is commonly called the Wisdom literature (Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Job), but conspicuously and most uniquely in the prophetic writings, which stand alone in literature as a form of philosophy. Singularly enough, however, these two classes do not exhaust the philosophical literature of the Old Testament; it appears again in that very modern form, the purpose story. Certain philosophers of Israel found a way to bring their high thoughts to the comprehension of the people in precisely the form which makes them comprehensible to the young people of today.

Though a good deal has of late been said against the purpose story as a form of art, it is certainly, when effectively written, an excellent means of accomplishing its end. The late Mr. Shorthouse, justifying his use of the method in

"John Inglesant," said that if James Hinton had written his marvellous philosophical study of "The Mystery of Pain" in the form of a novel, it would have brought illumination to hundreds for every one which his matchless little book has reached. The purpose stories of the Old Testament are effectively written. It would be difficult to find any others which more perfectly meet their writer's purpose. They are Ruth, Jonah, Esther, and the story part of Job; and although three of these are commonly ranked with history and the fourth with prophecy, yet for practical purposes every mother has included them in the story lore of the Old Testament. And the mothers are right.

The purpose story may be founded upon historic incidents, as "John Inglesant" is, or, like Mrs. Ward's "Robert Elsmere" and Charles Dudley Warner's "Golden House," it may not. The author may treat history with absolute freedom, bending facts to suit the purpose of the story, as Mr. Shorthouse does in "John Inglesant," or he may endeavor to remain faithful to history, like Dickens in his "Tale of Two Cities." But historic incident in either case is a mere convenience, to be used so far as it serves the author's philosophic purpose, and no farther.

I have mentioned only four Old Testament pur-

pose stories, but in fact there is a great wealth of problem or purpose story in the Old Testament, and it is used, like all its story lore, with one supreme purpose, which commands the immediate and more restricted purpose of each; namely, to develop religious truth, especially to bring mankind by degrees to a correct notion of God. The body of Old Testament story literature, taken as a whole, shows that the intellectual and moral progress of Israel was conditioned in the enlargement of their thought of God, from the purely local deity whose interest and power are restricted to the descendants of Abraham, to the God of heaven and earth, who takes an interest in all humanity, and even in the dumb creatures, and who rules over the heavenly hosts.

It will not appear singular to the mother who has been telling Bible stories along the lines indicated in the preceding chapters, that this enlarging conception of God is presented in a series of stories whose religious teachings are less fundamental, less universal, than those which preceded them. This has been the rule from the beginning. The most comprehensive truths of all, truths of the origin of the universe and of man's relations to God and to his fellow-man, were revealed not in history, as would indeed be impossible, but in these earliest stories which are not history at all,

but the religious treatment of ancient myth; — stories every detail of which, unlike those that come later, speaks as compellingly to the little child as to the learned sage, being in fact better adapted to win the assent of the artless faith of the child than of the trained intelligence of the man. In these instances, as in many others, the little child leads, and sage and scholar best fit themselves to apprehend sublimest truth by becoming "as a little child." As the stories advance from folk-lore to saga, hero tale, romance, history, the truths they teach become less universal, more restricted in scope. And this rule would lead us to expect that the four purpose stories I have named will be found embodying truths still more restricted in significance than those that have gone before. They were truths of immense practical importance; at the time when they were taught to Israel in this story form the nation urgently needed these lessons; and as we study them we shall see that they must have had an important influence upon the conduct as well as the character of the Hebrew people. Even now, though their interest is chiefly historical and literary, their teachings are of importance to the children to whom they may be told.

Our slight study of the evolution of the story literature of the Old Testament has made very

clear that the literary form in which truth may be embodied in no wise affects the force of the truth. It is, therefore, of no importance whether these problem stories are history or not. All of them probably have a historic basis, but the purpose of their writers was not to tell history. A very little reflection makes it clear that whether or not these four stories belong in one literary class, none of them belongs in the same class with the history of the kings of Israel and Judah, which we find in the book of Kings, or the history of the return from exile in Ezra. They belong, as I have suggested, in the class which may be comprehensively called philosophy. That is, the truths they embody are truths of life and practice, ethical truths which other nations — for instance, Greeks and Germans — would treat abstractly, but which the genius of the Hebrew mind and of the Hebrew language alike urged the Hebrews to treat concretely.

These stories are, in fact, not more different from any form of Western literature than they are from any other form of Old Testament literature that we have thus far studied. They belong to a very common form of Eastern literature, however. The Jews call it Haggada, which means doctrinal or practical teaching based on parable or legend. There are various kinds of Haggada

besides those illustrated in Ruth, Jonah, Esther, and Job ; they belong to what the Jews call Midrash, that is, the didactic treatment of sacred writings with embellishments for purposes of popular instruction, moral or practical. The method of telling Bible stories which I have been describing may be called a sort of Midrash. Very much of the theological controversy of the ages and of the present day is due to the fact which theologians might have learned from any Jewish rabbi, or from a study of rabbinical literature ; but quite as effectively by critical study of the Old Testament ; this fact, namely, that much of the Old Testament is Midrash. The Chronicles are manifestly Midrash, as may be seen by comparing them with Kings and Samuel, for the writer very obviously has a doctrinal or didactic purpose. Some of his writings are founded on earlier Midrashîm. He expressly says that two of the eighteen authorities which he quotes are Midrash. The Authorized Version says "story," the margin says "commentary," which is more nearly correct ; the Hebrew says "Midrash."

Midrash is a late development of Hebrew literature, later than any of the forms which we have thus far studied. The books of Chronicles were written in the fourth century before Christ, as some of their lists of names show, and there is

very little Midrash in the Bible, of which the dates can be clearly ascertained, which is much earlier than this. After this date there is an immense deal of Midrash in Hebrew literature. Some of it, like the stories of Susanna and Tobit, is in the Apocrypha; much more of it is in the rabbinical writings, but some of it is in the Old Testament.

All this is important to the mother and the teacher, for the way they tell Bible stories naturally depends upon how they understand them. And it is of importance to the older children who already, through the graded method of story-telling, have become interested in the development of Hebrew literature. I venture to hope that the time will soon come when the study of Biblical literature from this point of view will take its place in the college curriculum alongside that of Greek and Latin literature as an exercise of immense humanizing value. That thorough restatement of Christian doctrine which will be one of the large tasks of a coming generation will be more efficient, and its results more readily accepted by the public, if this study has previously had a part in forming the mentality of that period.

There is no more reason why the Haggadic treatment of a historic incident should not be in the Bible than why a poem should not be there,

or a parable; but the intelligent mother or teacher does not interpret poem or parable or Haggada as she interprets history.

II

Ruth ii.—v.

Though the story of Ruth stands in our English Bible between Judges and Samuel, and treats of the same period as the first and the early chapters of the second, — the turbulent "days when the Judges ruled," — it is impossible for any intelligent reader to put Ruth in the same literary category as Judges or Samuel. Judges is a collection of hero tales; 1 Samuel is like a mediæval romance of chivalry, and Ruth is certainly neither. It is a pure pastoral, but there are other and more important points of difference than this. Ruth is by no means entirely objective, like the other two books. It shows reflection, subjectivity, and subjectivity comes late in literature. Moreover, its author's evident delight in folk-lore was chiefly due to a historic interest; he desired to preserve a memory of old customs, — the levirate marriage, the plucking off of the shoe, the important functions of the elders sitting in the gate, the primitive ways of wooing, — and interest in

folk-lore and ancient customs from this viewpoint develops late in the history of any people. All these things tend to show that Ruth is a sort of Haggada; that an old legend, keeping alive an incident in the time of the Judges, perhaps preserved in writing, perhaps handed down orally, was chosen by this writer as the vehicle for a teaching which in his time was of great importance. We may defer asking what that teaching was, and at what time in the nation's history it was important, until we come to Jonah, for that book teaches an analogous truth, needed at the same period. These things are not for the younger children, though for the older children at the present day they have much of value. For the younger children Ruth is just a lovely story. Its idyllic character is delightful, its nature consciousness is exquisite. In construction it is thoroughly artistic. The important fact, important from more than one point of view, that this alien girl is the ancestress of David, best beloved of all Israel's kings, is kept back until the very end. It is the very perfection of story-telling. The subject is as beautiful as it is unusual; it is the infrequent theme of the mutual love and loyalty of two women. In what literature in the world, except that of Israel, would such a subject have been treated at that period? And having been

thus treated in Israel, it was impossible that coarse jokes about the mother-in-law, such as even at this late day disgrace our own newspaper literature, should ever have found a place in the Hebrew mind. In no other work known to early literature has this relationship been treated with such dignity and pathos.

Ruth is hardly for the tiny children, but it will not be difficult to make it very real to children of eight or nine, and the relief map will help in giving it a background. From the Bethlehem home, the house of bread high on the uplands of Mount Judah, Elimelech and his family were driven by famine. They took refuge in the fruitful tableland of Moab, just across the Dead Sea. The children will make for themselves the picture of the little caravan turning their faces from the high Bethlehem moor to the purple hills of Moab, travelling eastward by the road that goes steeply down to Jericho in the deep cleft of Jordan, and across the fords of the river to those foreign hills. Tell them how the two sons married happily in that foreign land, and how, in the country in which they had sought refuge from famine, that enemy, death, from which there is no refuge, found them in their happiness. Tell them how, the father and the two sons being dead, Naomi and the two young Moabitish daughters-in-law

were left alone : how Naomi resolved to return to her old home, and how Ruth decided to go with her. It will do the children no harm to explain to them the true reason for her decision. Indeed, this will be perhaps the most appropriate opportunity to open to their minds the religious ideas of those early days, which a year or two later they will find in some of the stories with which they are already familiar. Ruth's motive in going home with Naomi was simply that she loved her. It was piety, not toward God, but toward Naomi which prompted her beautiful words, "Thy God my God." It was in the nature of religious belief in Israel as elsewhere at the time, that going from Moab to live with Naomi in Judah Ruth should leave behind her the god Chemosh, whom she had been brought up to worship, and worship Jehovah. The God of the land would be her God, just as Naomi's people would be her people. For we cannot expect that the men and women of that time could have known as much about God as we know about Him, now that the Lord Jesus has come to reveal Him to the world.

It will be easy to awaken the sympathy of the children with the loneliness of the Moabite girl in Bethlehem. A poet has told us how "she stood in tears amid the alien corn," and though there are no tears in the Bible story, only brave self-

forgetfulness and unselfish love, it will not be amiss some day to read the poem, after they have become familiar with the story. Their young imaginations will vividly picture the brave, homesick girl as she followed the reapers on the hillside fields of Boaz, looking away from time to time across the deep cleft of the Dead Sea to the purple mountains of her old Moab home. They must often have seemed to beckon her to leave the woman to whom she was bound only by the memory of her dead young husband ; to leave the narrow poverty and the arduous toil which only love made necessary ; and the children will all the more appreciate how very brave and very loving Ruth must have been, since she resisted the call of her native mountains. Ballad and tale have already made them familiar with the peculiar love of a mountain-bred people, like the Swiss and the Highlanders, for their mountains, and of the homesickness, sometimes even unto death, from which they suffer in a foreign land. Ruth endured just this, in the very sight of her mountains, for love of her mother-in-law, Naomi.

The mother hardly needs help in telling the rest of the lovely story — the gleaning with the maidens in the powerful kinsman's field, the sheaf brought home to her mother-in-law, the joyous harvest-home festival, the happy marriage of Ruth

that followed, and the birth of the little baby to gladden the old grandmother's heart. These are incidents in the story which may safely be read or told to them precisely as they stand. They will take them simply, as, alas! the commentators have not always done, and will not find the difficulty experienced by these learned men in understanding it a matter of course that Naomi should take advantage of a local custom to bring home to the prominent citizen for whom Ruth worked, and who was her kinsman, the fact of the young widow's unprotected condition in those wild days when the Judges ruled.

The story, penetrated through and through with the noblest form of filial love, is simply a lovely story for the younger children. There is more in it for the older children, as we shall presently see.

III

Jonah i.—iv.

The story of Jonah is a purpose story with precisely the same significance as that of Ruth, and it would be difficult to conceive of the same lesson being taught in two more widely different ways. Ruth is a sweet and lovely pastoral, appealing to the reflective rather than to the constructive imagi

nation. Jonah is a wonder tale, from first to last a story of marvels, precisely of the kind we read in Eastern story lore, even to the insertion of a bit of poetry, just as occurs in like cases in the "Arabian Nights." In fact, not only have various Eastern peoples, such as the Assyrians and Persians, folk tales in which animals have a share in the repentance of the people, like those in Nineveh, there is a Roman folk tale which closely resembles the voyage part of the story.

Jonah is one of the most delightful of wonder tales for the very little child, and also of tremendous interest to the growing boy. The mother can hardly err in making much of the storm at sea, even — if she have no yachting experience — to the point of preparing herself for the story-telling by studying the description of St. Paul's shipwreck in Conybeare and Howson's "Life of St. Paul," or some classic description of a storm in the Eastern Mediterranean. For the boy who will delight in the story then told, and all that follows, as well as for the older children, there is the profound meaning of it all. Both Jonah and Ruth teach the important, but at that time almost undreamed-of, truth, that Israel does not monopolize the interest of God. In these stories we find the first foreshadowings of the truth of universal brotherhood, which is taking concrete form to-

day in trades-unions and civic leagues, in "betterment work," and in hospitality to immigrants, and is still forgotten in our treatment of the Chinese, and too often in our relations with the colored folk.

Nothing can be less didactic than the way in which the lesson is taught in Ruth, — simply by the beautiful character and conduct of an alien girl, and by holding her up, implicitly, as the ideal Israelitish maiden. Jonah, on the contrary, is above all things didactic. From first to last the story is a moral lesson, enforcing the truth that God does care for others besides the chosen race. But what a marvellous form this almost fiercely didactic teaching takes on! The adventures of Sindbad the sailor are tame beside this story of the prophet who tried to run away from God. And the surprising thing about it is that it more nearly belongs with Sindbad the sailor, as to literary class, than with those other prophets, like Isaiah and Zechariah, who also make use of parable, or, like Hosea, who tells a life story with prophetic purpose. This book is certainly not within the scope of the prophetic literature, although, as was briefly indicated in our first chapter, the latter also contains a wealth of story lore. It will not be amiss here to remind the mother, as an important fact to be held in consciousness, that

whatever else she may think of Jonah, it is clearly not in the literary class with prophets like Isaiah and Hosea.

Now there are two kinds of literature which this story suggests, or would suggest if it were not in the Bible. One is folk-lore, pure and simple, and the other is myth. The old myth of the dragon that swallowed the sun every evening and cast him up every morning has appeared more than once in our Bible story-telling. This myth is one of the oldest and most widely extended of all that are known to us. Some of the prophets make use of it, though the translators, not apprehending the force of the allusion, have generally left it so obscure as to be hardly recognizable. But it is not only in myth that we find the story of the restoration to life of people or animals after having been swallowed. Nursery lore is full of it. The mother has often told her delighted children the stories of the wolf and the seven young kids, of the three little pigs, and of little Red Ridinghood and her grandmother, kids and pigs and Red Ridinghood and grandmother, all restored to life after the wolf or the fox has devoured them. The Hindus tell of Sakhdeva being swallowed by a fish and cast up again, precisely as in the case of Jonah, and nearly every nation has a similar folk tale. All these stories are in fact one. They are

all the outgrowth of the attempt of the primitive mind to understand a great mystery, the subduing of day by night, the overcoming of the sun in his full strength by the storm cloud, and the final victory of the sun in the returning day. The immense difference between these myths and folk tales and Jonah is this: that in Jonah the old wonder is brought to bear upon a mystery not of nature but of grace, and the old myth is made to teach a religious truth, teaching it by one of the most exquisite of stories, which hardly any literature can parallel.

Now when the mother tells this story to the children, let her not try to improve on the method of the writer. Let her not say that all this really happened, and try to fit its various statements into the historic or the geographic facts. The relief map has no place in the story of Jonah. It is impossible to make it tally with facts either of history or geography, and this writer never expected that any mother would try to do so. He supposed her to be gifted with imagination, and he no more dreamed that she or any one would try to prove his veracity by discovering a fish with a gullet large enough to permit the passage of a man, or a man gifted with respiratory organs which would permit him to live three days in the interior of a sea monster, than he expected people to believe

that the beasts in Nineveh put on sackcloth and cried mightily to God at the preaching of Jonah.[1] Every intelligent person, every youngest child, knows that they neither did nor could, and that eighth verse of the third chapter is enough, if there had been no great fish and no swallowing of Jonah and casting him up, to show every mother accustomed to story-telling, whose mind is not helplessly bound in the trammels of a mistaken theory of inspiration, that this story is a pure work of the imagination, as beautiful as "Pilgrim's Progress," and as true.

IV

Before asking what larger use the mother may make of this story with the older children, let me try to answer some questions that may arise in her mind. Yes, the prophet Jonah is a real character; and this is one of the reasons why this book is not prophecy. Jonah lived in the time of the second Jeroboam, who was a most brilliant and prosperous monarch, the Solomon of the northern

[1] It is a fact, however, and one that has its profound bearing on the essential truth of this story, that more than once in Eastern history, and at least once during the reign of the present Sultan of Turkey, and by his command, domestic cattle have been clothed in sackcloth and left unfed during a national fast.

kingdom. The brief reference to Jonah in the fourteenth chapter of 2 Kings indicates that he was a politician-prophet, as Elisha was in an earlier period, for the splendid work of Jeroboam II in raising up his nation from the abject condition into which it had fallen under Jehoahaz, to the large prestige and power which it enjoyed during his reign, was evidently greatly due to the prophetic influence of Jonah.[1] But of all this there is not a word in the book of Jonah; not a syllable in it could have helped Jonah's prophetic work; and if this were the place for developing the historic question, it would be seen that it would have been detrimental to it.

One familiar with the development of Hebrew literature as the Bible shows it, as the foregoing pages have in some degree indicated it, cannot but perceive that this book is of far later date than Jeroboam II, and that it is pure Midrash, the imaginative use of an old legend attributed to a real character, and thus used for the purpose of popular instruction. When the prophet was alive nothing could have been less pertinent to the time

[1] 2 Kings xiv. 25. He restored the border of Israel from the entering in of Hamath unto the Sea of the Arabah, according to the word of Jehovah, the God of Israel, which he spake by the hand of his servant Jonah, the son of Amittai the prophet, who was of Gath-hepher.

and the necessities of the case than the teaching of universal brotherhood. The business of the nation at that time was to build itself strong and compact, a separate people in the midst of the nations, to preserve a purer idea of God than any of them had attained to. Israel at that time had no more come to the lesson of universal sympathy and religious responsibility than our ten-year-old boys have come to international law. The time when the lesson was in order is very evident to those who are well read in the Biblical history of Israel. The ninth and tenth chapters of Ezra, and the thirteenth of Nehemiah, show the excessive and arrogant exclusiveness of the Jews after their return from exile. A reading of these chapters makes very clear that the stories of Ruth and of Jonah were written by two men of larger minds and inspired by wider sympathies than other Israelites of their day possessed, widely differing in genius, but alike clear in apprehension of the true mission of Israel — to be a blessing to all nations. Both wrote to teach the same great truth, that God cares for Moabites and Ninevites, and thus for all peoples, as well as for Israel. One who reads in the tenth chapter of Ezra of the cruelly drastic measures taken by that leader to keep Israel a separate people by separating the men of Israel from their alien wives, must be impressed

by the fine artistic character as well as moral power of the author of the book of Ruth. It is impossible that there should not have been in the community — as indeed the narrative shows — some men of generous soul who were revolted by the unflinching sternness of the zealous and bigoted Ezra. Evidently one of them, a man of inspired genius, possibly one who had been called by Ezra to put away a beloved alien wife, recalling a historic incident in the royal house of Israel, wrote the beautiful story in which a Moabitish damsel — no more a Jewess than those weeping "women of the land" who with their children were being so inexorably "put away" — displayed the loveliest of virtues and attained to the high honor of being an ancestress of David's royal line. Not until this very time would the idea of combating the national exclusiveness have been likely to occur to any Jewish philosopher. And assuredly it was a philosopher, and a man of letters, not a priest nor an annalist, who perceived that this was the best way to combat it. What "Uncle Tom's Cabin" was to the Southern slaves, that in its degree was Ruth to the aliens who were living among the returned Israelites.

Evidently Ruth is based upon a historic incident; was Jonah? Is it too much to say that to connect it, however slightly, with history, is

absurd? Not the story of the great fish merely — far too much stress has been laid upon that incident, and it is by no means the only impossible incident in the narrative. There is quite as much that is difficult to believe in the story of the gourd as in that of the fish, quite as much in the story of the storm as in either, quite as much in the story of the repentance of the Ninevites as in any of the others, though the difficulties differ in character. But aside from these difficulties there is a historic impossibility. Not only is such a missionary journey as that of Jonah unheard of in Hebrew history, it could not have been undertaken in the time when Jonah actually lived, about 750 B.C. The political conditions in both countries forbade. The reason for finding Jonah to be a "purpose story" is distinctly not that "miracles do not happen"; if there were not a miracle in the story, it would still be historically impossible. But as a purpose story, a longer parable, what a marvellous work of inspired genius it is, and how wonderfully adapted to meet the spiritual and ethical need of the time!

Jonah is a symbol of the Jewish people; the great sea monster, more properly, as we have seen, the dragon, stands for Babylon. Let the older children read the fifty-first chapter of Jeremiah with Jonah in mind — the oracle against

Babylon. It is a marvellously woven tissue of metaphor from first to last, but point out to them especially verse 34, "Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon hath *devoured* me; he hath crushed me, he hath made me an empty vessel, he hath swallowed me up like a *monster* (the Hebrew is dragon), he hath filled his maw with my delicacies, he hath *cast me out.*" And verse 44, "And I will do judgment upon Bel in Babylon, and I will *bring forth out of his mouth that which he hath swallowed up.*" Bel was a god of Babylon, and is constantly connected with the dragon as the very title of one of the Apocryphal books shows.

The figure of Babylon as a devouring monster, swallowing up Israel, is frequent in the prophets before and during the captivity. The boys and girls will find it in Isaiah and Ezekiel, as well as in Jeremiah. That it was a permanent possession of the Jewish mind is evident from the fact that it reappears in Revelation. It was as natural, as inevitable, that a writer of parable immediately after the return should figure Babylon as a monster that had swallowed up Israel and had been forced to cast him up again, as that Bunyan in his great parable should figure the church of Rome as a superannuated giant, sitting impotent in his cave, biting his fingers at those who passed by.

So we might go on to every detail of this wonderful parable, and find it paralleled in the thinking of Israel in the previous centuries. And why should it not be so? Why should we, in our arrogant individualism, insist that this story was written to teach history to us? Why not be glad to perceive that it was written to teach an imperatively needed truth to the Hebrew people? Israel had forgotten her high vocation, announced to Abraham, "In thee shall all nations of the earth be blessed." Never more zealous for the establishment of the kingdom of God on earth than at this period, she would fain have done it by destroying all the other nations and occupying the whole field. This prophetic writer — a prophet, though he wrote in parable — saw that her mission was not to destroy but to save, that she must save even at cost of her own life. How clearly, how dazzlingly, this great truth shines out when we cease to look for the prosaic truth of history, and find the higher truth of poetry! What pathos there is in it all! The great German critic, Cornill, said that he could never read Jonah without tears. Let us cease to treat the book as a burlesque, as too many do, even of those who believe inspiration to lie in literal accuracy, and teach our children the solemn meaning of this wonder tale. We Americans, like Israel, often need hard experi-

ences before we learn what God wants us to do. Like Israel, we too often refuse to open our eyes to that which is our true vocation, to be mediators of the redemption of the world.

But this is the most advanced lesson of the book. Purely as a story, Jonah is one of the best stories in the Bible for the tiny ones, the children who are still trailing the clouds of glorious imagination which they brought with them from heaven which is their home. To their vivid imagination it will all be true — the embarkation, the storm, the terrified prayers of the heathen sailors, the ready self-sacrifice of Jonah, the interposition of God for his rescue, the repentance of the Ninevites, the quickly growing gourd, the petulance of the weary and disappointed prophet, disappointed that his preaching had fulfilled its purpose in making his prophecy futile. Told to the little ones as the beautiful fairy tale that it is, nothing will be more delightful nor more simple than to expand its meaning as the child's mind expands, until he comes to realize the yearning love of God that gathers up in its infinite compassion, not only the most alien of nations, but our brothers the beasts of the field and the forest, as St. Francis beautifully recognized them to be. The last words of the book, put in their proper relation to the story, and given their full significance, will do more to

make a boy gentle to the weak and the ignorant and considerate to people of other hue and race than his own, than all the humane societies and missionary associations that the modern mind has yet devised; "Should not I have pity on Nineveh that great city, wherein are more than sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand, *and also much cattle?*"

And later will come those deeper, larger, and more personal teachings, to which I have before alluded, the truths of inward experience, and the imperative call of every child of God to the work of missions and the saving of the world.

V

Esther i.—x.

It has seemed so important to emphasize the true literary character and the profound spiritual significance of Jonah, that I have left myself space only for a brief allusion to Esther and Job. But for my purpose little more is needed. Not that they are unimportant, but that the meaning of Esther is perfectly simple, and that of Job far too profound for even the children of maturing years. They must have become independent thinkers be-

fore they can find in Job any other excellence than its superb excellence as a piece of literature. The prologue and epilogue, however, are a story. When the mother leaves out all of Job but these three chapters, she perceives that widely as in almost every particular it differs from Esther, it belongs in the same literary class, the class to which the "Arabian Nights" belong; that is, to oriental wonder literature. It is because so few of our learned theologians are familiar with this literature, even in the perfectly accessible and altogether charming "Arabian Nights," that some of our most devout religious teachers are gravely discussing at the present day the question whether there is *any* religious or moral truth in Esther, and whether it was not by some unaccountable mistake that it found a place among sacred Scriptures.

For it is true that the story shows a fierce, unrelenting, vindictive spirit of revenge, that it does not name the name of God, and that it implicitly commends many acts which are not noble nor even tolerable. These are the moral difficulties of the book, and if we are to read it from our modern and Western point of view, they are far more important than the historical difficulties, though if we insist upon calling the book history, these are absolutely insuperable. The book shows no slightest notion of chronology. It would have been impossible for

any Achæmenian sovereign to have chosen either a Jewess for a queen or an Amelekite (Haman the Agagite, see 1 Sam. xv. 32) for a prime minister. There never were, in that period of Persian history, nor so far as we know, in any other, such restrictions as to the queen seeing her husband as Esther had to contend with — the very pivot of the story. Nor was there ever such liberty for an uncle to visit his niece in the king's harem. The length of the feast, the length of time allotted to prepare a chosen maiden for introduction to the king, — these are simply historical impossibilities. Moreover, some of the historic statements are morally impossible; for instance, the issuance of a decree for a general massacre of the Jews eleven months in advance, and the method by which the king gets round the irrefragable law of the Medes and Persians, by giving the Jews permission to butcher the Persians for two days.

It would be possible to take the book almost verse by verse and prove its historic impossibility, but it would be utterly absurd. For the book of Esther is not a history at all, and never offered itself as such : it is Haggada, a purpose story. It is an idyl of patriotism, given to the Jews in that bitter period of their history when patriotism was most sorely tested and most urgently needed, — the period of Greek supremacy ; and it probably

did more than any book in the Bible to keep patriotism alive in that dreadful time. Let the children who are studying history read the books of Maccabees in the Apocrypha if they would learn what was the influence of the book of Esther.

Esther is the type of self-sacrifice for a great cause. There is no direct religious teaching; but read it with the "Arabian Nights" in mind, and alongside of immediate recognition of the character and worth of the book as a picture of oriental customs will awake the perception that unlike all other oriental stories of its class it is penetrated through and through with the consciousness of God. Let the mother beware in telling this story to the children how she loses this God consciousness. Loyalty to country, as one element in loyalty to God, is its key-note.

VI

Job i., ii., xlii. 7—17

Job was doubtless a historical character of the patriarchal age, although a great Hebrew rabbi has said that "Job existed not, nor was created, but is a parable." He simply means, and is right in meaning, that no part of the book of Job is his-

tory. Job was not a Jew, but he is made by the author of the book a personification of the Jewish nation in captivity. Reading some parts of Jeremiah, in which he protests against the efforts of Israel to escape from the doom of captivity which God has pronounced upon the nation, it seems very clear why, and when, some ancient legend was made by some inspired man the foundation of this wonderful book.

It was when it was the nation's duty simply *to bear.*

This, however, hardly touches the edge of the purpose of this book. We have to do only with the prologue and epilogue which, as so generally in the "Arabian Nights," enframe the separate story of the thirty-nine inner chapters. The opening chapters are a philosophic treatment of pure folk-lore — a purpose story again. They are the attempt to discover the meaning of what in a primitive, simple condition of society must always be a mystery — the afflictions of the righteous. The problem of the poetic chapters which the prologue and epilogue enframe is quite other than this ; but it does not concern the children, nor any but advanced thinkers. The profound thinker and deeply inspired writer who used this ancient folk tale to explain the mystery of the sorrows of the righteous by attributing them to

the scepticism of Satan knew better than to change the time-honored form which by its familiarity would make all the more intelligible the far otherwise profound teaching he desired to base upon it. The symbolic numbers and the poetic structure of the four announcements of woe are left just as the writer had many a time heard them told by nurse or mother. But the scenes in heaven are no part of the ancient story; *they* are the result of the writer's search for the meaning of an actual experience. It is he, therefore, and not the old story-tellers, who introduces the heavenly council. This is a work of the trained imagination, familiar by experience with the judicial processes of his country — and upon these the "Arabian Nights" will throw perfect light. He pictures the great judicial assembly of the sons of God in such a divan as Eastern monarchs hold. "The Satan" is among them. He appears to be a functionary put by God in charge of this world, and this is the impression given in the Hebrew in a number of earlier passages in the Bible, where the word *Satan* does not appear in the English as it does here. The Satan comes from "hurrying to and fro upon the earth, and pacing up and down on it." This is in precise accordance with the Eastern conception of "the busy one," as the Arabs call him. In St. Peter's

Epistle equal familiarity with this idea gives him the name "the peripatetic."

From the question put to him by God, "Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the world?" it appears that in the mind of the people of that time and place it was the Satan's duty to detect the sins and defects of men; and there is here a word of warning for tale-bearing children: perhaps it was the effect of such an occupation that made him a devil. The pride which God takes in his good servant Job arouses the Satan's passion for detecting faults, and the conscience of many a child will interpret this incident. That this doubting spirit may be convinced of the reality of Job's goodness, God permits the trial of his beloved servant. And here again is a suggestion of the undeserved suffering that a fault-finding, tale-bearing child may be the means of inflicting.

Evidently there is far more in this prologue than most of us have supposed, and its meaning is perhaps peculiarly difficult for adult persons to apprehend. Yet it is precisely one that will find quick response in the ingenuous mind of a child of ten or eleven. For its marvellous teaching is that the interests of man are the interests of heaven; that God and all the angels are concerned that people shall be good and shall have

the credit of being good ; that the goodness of a good person should be precious to all who know him. Not until the children are much older, and have come to the serious study of ethics, are they capable of sounding the almost unfathomable depths of this beautifully imaginative story. Let us take our shoes from off our feet while we stand on this holy ground, learning from this story that the moral problems which cannot but assail even the angels, "the sons of God," and which they must needs in some way work out, — else their goodness is like the goodness of Adam and Eve in Eden, the unreal goodness of the untried, — are wrought out *for them* by the sons of men, and are potent for the angels because of the pure disinterested sympathy of which angels are capable. For the sake of the moral lesson to the angels, — to the Satan himself, if he would but have received it, — he is permitted to go on testing the man of integrity to the very limit of his mortal powers. What more soul-enlarging, soul-fortifying view of life and its discipline of temptation can a mother give to her older children? Where in all story lore, where in all literature outside of the Bible, will she find so lofty a sanction for the effort to acquire moral character, for acquiescence in trial, and war to the death against temptation, as this ineffable fellowship with the sons of God?

VII

My task is done. Its reward is mine already if I have given any effective assistance to mothers in the use of Old Testament story lore for the spiritual development of their children, not alone in infancy, but through all their maturing years. I trust that I have succeeded in showing that the themes which lie at the heart of the Bible stories are the great central themes into which all experience, all knowledge, all study of science and philosophy, as well as of theology and morals, sooner or later meet. I have here only briefly to recapitulate the method by which, as I believe, the mother may reap the richest harvest from her use of the Bible with her children; that which, in analogy with the educational system of to-day, I have called the graded method of telling Bible stories.

First, at about three, the story in its simplest possible outline, and as much as may be in the Bible words. Then at about five an elementary unfolding of its spiritual meaning, in answer to the child's importunate "Why?" This is to be followed at about eight by careful coördination of the story with the child's first elementary knowledge of mythology and history. A year or

two later the coördination of these stories with geography and elementary science may be in order, and not very much later, with the child's sense of language as illustrated in poetry and wonder tales. At about twelve or thirteen the alert young mind, expanded from its earliest activity by ever expanding apprehension of spiritual truth, never having been confused by any contradiction between its Biblical and its secular acquisitions, always having been harmoniously active in its three functions of imagination, emotion, and will, is ready for the theological and ethical interpretation of the story, in what may be called the grammar school grade of these interpretations, of which he has already had the elementary grade. His more advanced historical work will enable him to put the stories in their proper place in history, and his studies in the classics and in English literature to appreciate the literary character of the Bible, the place of each story in the history of literature, its oriental diction and forms of speech. There will be no difficulty if this method has been pursued thus far, if neither the child's Bible nor his religion has been kept as a thing apart, unrelated to his school work or his week day life, reserved for Sunday or forgotten entirely — there will be no difficulty, when this method has been pursued till his fifteenth or sixteenth year, in

carrying it farther, and relating it to his higher study of ethics and philosophy, as well as of history and literature, and making it an illumination of both, instead of, as too often sadly happens, a stumbling-block and cause of blind bewilderment.

This, then, is the value of the Bible stories for the child: that they give a religious meaning to all the experiences of his early life, and furnish the bond of unity, the centralizing focus of all the processes, intellectual, moral, and spiritual, of his maturing years. "No other book *finds me* as the Bible does," said Coleridge, and this is superlatively true of the child of any age. The Bible stories find him as no other stories do. The Old Testament made the Hebrews a peculiar people, by developing in them an unique God consciousness. It will do the same for the people of the United States when it is freed from overloading convention and unintelligent interpretation. It will do this for our children, if we give it to them as it is. And what better can we ask for them than an abiding consciousness of the presence of God?

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